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The neglected creature : the doctrine of the non-human creation and its relationship with the human in the thought of Karl Barth.

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THE NEGLECTED CREATURE:
THE DOCTRINE OF THE NON-HUMAN ~~CREATION~~
AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE HUMAN
IN THE THOUGHT OF KARL BARTH

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ABSTRACT

One of the strongest claims made for Barth's Christo-centric method in his Dogmatics is that it allows for "pure theology" to emerge saved from "all corruption from the side of anthropocentric thinking".¹ It should be expected, therefore, that Barth would offer us the fullest theological account of the nature and purpose of the non-human creation. For what end were they created? How did they come to be and how should man relate to them? When questions are pressed it becomes disconcertingly obvious that for all the Christological richness of his work, Barth is not free from a "naive and direct anthropocentricity" against which he earlier protested (p. 6). More glaringly, his determination to reduce the doctrine of creation to practical "anthropology" (p. 178) fails to provide the fullest trinitarian account of God's relationship with the world he has made. God is "obviously not interested in" the totality of beings which make up the cosmos (p. 278) and thus the non-human world is strangely otiose from the standpoint of its Creator. The self-disclosure of the Word is developed in opposition to the creative Word who causes all things to be and to the incarnate Word who unites himself with the ousia of created reality. The missing link in all this is the biblical witness that the divine covenant extends to all living creatures (see esp. pp. 154f). Barth stresses the reality of covenant but crucially fails to grasp its inclusivity. And yet Barth's presuppositions could allow for, arguably even provide, a rich account of the non-human cosmos. Trinitarian theology can be properly anthropocentric only if the work of man is seen in terms of the moral exemplar of Jesus, that is, self-costly obedience to the will of God. By skirting the full reality of man's moral relationship with the non-human, Barth obscures the as yet unfinished nature of creation and the present and future work of the Spirit in redemption.

1. T.F. Torrance, Karl Barth: An Introduction to his Early Theology, 1910-1931, The Preacher's Library (London: SCM Press, 1962) p. 143; his italics.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: MAN AND THE CREATED ORDER: THE PUZZLE OF

ANTHROPOCENTRICITY

| | |
|---|----|
| <u>Creation as an Article of Faith</u> | 2 |
| <u>Jesus Christ as the Centre of Divine Creativity</u> | 4 |
| <u>A Qualified Anthropocentricity?</u> | 13 |
| <u>Creation History (Schöpfungsgeschichte)</u> | 17 |
| <u>Questions Concerning the Non-Human</u> | 20 |
| <u>The First Saga: Surveying the Ground</u> | 24 |
| (i) God's love for Creation | 30 |
| (ii) God's Covenant Relationship | 31 |
| (iii) The Creation of Light (1:3) | 31 |
| (iv) The Separation of the Waters (1: 6-8) | 32 |
| (v) The Creation of Vegetation (1: 11-13) | 32 |
| (vi) The Creation of the Greater Lights (1: 14-19) | 35 |
| (vii) The Creation of Fish and Birds (1: 20-23) | 35 |
| (viii) The Creation of Animals (24-26) | 37 |
| (ix) The Image of God in Man (26-28) | 37 |
| (x) Man's Dominion over Animals (28-29) | 38 |
| (xi) Nourishment for Man and Beast (29-31) | 42 |
| (xii) The Seventh Day (2: 1-3) | 46 |
| <u>Summary and Review: The Relationship between the</u> | |
| Human and the Non-Human | 48 |
| <u>Is the Non-Human Redundant?</u> | 55 |

CHAPTER TWO: AN EXCLUSIVE COVENANT: THE REDUNDANCY OF THE NON-HUMAN

| | |
|---|----|
| <u>An Outline of the Second Saga</u> | 58 |
| (i) The Christological Presupposition | 59 |
| (ii) The Garden of Glory | 60 |
| (iii) Sexual Difference as Human Co-partnership | 64 |
| (iv) Human Partnership past-figures Divine Election | 66 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| <u>The Anthropocentric Meaning of the Covenant</u> | 67 |
| <u>The Ambiguous Status of the Non-Human</u> | 68 |
| <u>The Symbiotic Dimension to the Covenant</u> | 77 |
| <u>The Christological Basis of Man's Stewardship</u> | 80 |
| <u>Man as a Christological Paradigm</u> | 85 |
| <u>Summary and Review: The Interaction between the</u> | |
| Human and the Non-Human | 89 |
| <u>Non-Human Creation without Covenant</u> | 96 |
| <u>CHAPTER THREE: GOD'S YES: THE REALITY AND GOODNESS OF CREATION</u> | 100 |
| <u>Surveying the Ground:</u> | |
| (i) God's Benevolence to Man | 100 |
| (ii) The Reality of Creaturely Freedom | 102 |
| (iii) Creation for Jesus Christ | 103 |
| <u>The Election and Goodness of Creation</u> | 107 |
| <u>God Rejoices in Differentiated Being</u> | 109 |
| <u>The Divorce between Covenant and Creation</u> | 111 |
| <u>Word without World?</u> | 118 |
| <u>A Non-Human Echo?</u> | 120 |
| <u>Descartes and Knowledge of the World</u> | 121 |
| <u>The Ambiguity of Anthropocentricity</u> | 124 |
| <u>Anthropocentric or Christocentric Justification?</u> | 127 |
| <u>Creation as Man's Pleasure Garden</u> | 132 |
| <u>Assessment</u> | |
| (1) Presuppositions | 139 |
| (2) Methods | 143 |
| (3) Results | 149 |
| <u>Basic Deficiencies</u> | |
| (i) Christological Deficiency | 150 |
| (ii) Biblical Deficiency | 154 |
| (iii) Ontological Deficiency | 156 |
| (iv) Trinitarian Deficiency | 160 |

Christological Reconstruction

| | |
|----------------------------|-----|
| A. Christ as Co-Creator | 163 |
| B. Christ as God-Incarnate | 164 |
| C. Christ as Reconciler | 171 |
| D. Christ as Redeemer | 173 |

CHAPTER FOUR: THE LONG QUEST FOR A DISTINCTIVE HUMANITY IN

| | |
|--|-----|
| <u>OPPOSITION TO THE NON-HUMAN</u> | 178 |
| <u>Creation Doctrine not Cosmology</u> | 178 |
| <u>Kerygma without Kosmologie?</u> | 184 |
| <u>The Word and the Intelligibility of the World</u> | 193 |
| <u>Jesus as Man within the Cosmos</u> | 197 |
| <u>Man Juxtaposed with Creation</u> | 200 |
| <u>Requirements of a Theological Anthropology</u> | 205 |
| <u>Real-Man: Un-real Creature?</u> | 209 |
| <u>Man in Opposition to the Non-Human</u> | 215 |
| <u>How Distinct is Human Nature?</u> | 220 |
| (i) Ontology | 221 |
| (ii) Dependence | 225 |
| (iii) Election | 226 |
| (iv) Hearing the Word | 226 |
| (v) History | 227 |
| (vi) Gratitude | 229 |
| (vii) Responsibility | 231 |
| <u>Real Man only for Other Men</u> | 233 |
| <u>Real Creature for All Creation?</u> | 235 |
| <u>Man in Fellowship</u> | 238 |
| <u>No Fellowship with the Non-Human?</u> | 241 |
| <u>Human Sexual Difference as the Basis of the</u> | |
| <u>Covenant Relationship</u> | 244 |
| <u>The Significance of Sexual Difference for</u> | |
| <u>Non-Human Creatures</u> | 246 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| <u>Man as a Besouled Body, Bodily Soul and Spirit</u> | 249 |
| <u>The Soulless Non-Human?</u> | 253 |
| <u>Man's Rationality as the Basis of Soulfulness</u> | 256 |
| <u>The Switch to Naturalistic Criteria</u> | 261 |
| <u>The Neglect of Materiality</u> | 263 |
| <u>No Mind, Soul or Status?</u> | 265 |
| <u>The Final Void</u> | 268 |
| <u>The Trinitarian Weakness</u> | 269 |
| <u>CHAPTER FIVE: THE ETHICAL DEFICIENCY OF ANTHROPOCENTRIC DOCTRINE</u> | 271 |
| <u>The Non-Human as a Marginal Problem of Ethics</u> | 271 |
| <u>The Inadequacy of Barth's Treatment</u> | 276 |
| <u>A Failure in Method</u> | 280 |
| <u>A Trinitarian Reconstruction</u> | |
| 1. <u>The Divine Giving</u> | 281 |
| The Response of Reverence | 285 |
| In Contrast to Scholastic Dualism | 289 |
| 2. <u>The Divine Rejoicing</u> | 292 |
| The Response of Responsibility | 296 |
| In Contrast to Humanist Utilitarians | 300 |
| 3. <u>The Divine Generosity</u> | 302 |
| The Response of Generosity | 304 |
| In Contrast to Naturalistic Theodicy | 310 |
| <u>BIBLIOGRAPHY</u> | |
| 1. <u>Primary Texts</u> | 313 |
| 2. <u>Other Relevant Works by Karl Barth</u> | 313 |
| 3. <u>Works on Karl Barth</u> | 315 |
| 4. <u>Other Works on, or Relevant to, the Doctrine</u> <u>of Creation</u> | 317 |

CHAPTER ONE: MAN AND THE CREATED ORDER:

THE PUZZLE OF ANTHROPOCENTRICITY

Karl Barth's treatment of Christian doctrine, especially creation, is the most extensive in this century. "Barth's theology is perhaps still the single corpus most necessary to understanding twentieth-century theology".¹ Although never completed, his magisterial Die Kirchliche Dogmatik spans four major parts consisting of: (1) The Doctrine of the Word of God; (2) the Doctrine of God; (3) The Doctrine of Creation, and (4) The Doctrine of Reconciliation, and these comprise between them twelve chapter volumes. Quantitatively, as well as qualitatively, his work on the central themes of Christian theology has never been bettered.

The Doctrine of Creation (Lehre von der Schöpfung) comprises the third part of Barth's scheme and this in four volumes: Chapter IX on 'The Work of Creation', Chapter X on 'The Creature', Chapter XI on 'The Creator and His Creature', and Chapter XII on 'The Command of God the Creator'. In what follows I shall be concerned primarily with the first two volumes, which set out most clearly in turn the work of creation and the place of man within it. My concern will be to inquire, describe and establish how Barth accounts for the non-human creation and its relationship to man, to relate in turn these insights to his overall theology especially in the Dogmatics, and to assess the theological adequacy of his treatment in relation to his own theological method. What account does Barth give of the creation of the non-human? How does non-human creation stand in relation to human creation? What end and purpose does non-human creation have? What, if any, is its theological significance within the created order? And how do we know through Barth's own theological method what we do know on the basis of revelation? In order to answer these questions I shall summarise each section of the two formative chapters, dwelling mainly on those issues which relate to our area of

1. D.F. Ford, 'Conclusion: Assessing Barth' in Karl Barth: Studies of his Theological Methods, ed. by S.W. Sykes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979) p. 200.

concern, and pause after each section to offer some assessment.² Because Barth's work is so intricate and intense it is necessary to distinguish and keep separate exposition and evaluation. A more detailed analysis will follow after we have looked in turn at the stages of argument and hopefully reached a clearer understanding of Barth's method and approach.

Creation as an Article of Faith

In his Preface to Chapter IX on 'The Work of Creation', Barth significantly enough indicates his unease at embarking upon this task. "A sphere in which I feel much less confident and sure", he writes. He would have gladly given over this work to others if only he had felt happier with their theological presuppositions. The "kernel" of this section, as he approaches it, consists "in the old-fashioned form of a radical exposition of the contents of the first two chapters of the Bible". Barth appreciates that this approach (which in turn will mark off and determine much that is subsequently written) will appear "strange". He had originally thought that scientific questions were to be encompassed in such an enquiry, but eventually decided against treating any of them directly. In the end the method chosen says as much about Barth as his subsequent analysis and exposition for he judges that "there could be no scientific problems, objections or aids in relation to what Holy Scripture and the Christian Church understand by the divine work of creation".³

2. I have omitted discussion of the section 'Man in his Time' in Part Two (437 - 641); whilst full of interest, it is only marginally relevant to the non-human creation.

3. Barth, Church Dogmatics, III, I, The Doctrine of Creation, Part One ('The Work of Creation'), eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance, ET by J.W. Edwards, O. Bussey and H. Knight (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1960) p. ix (preface):
On footnotes: To keep notes to the main texts to a minimum, only the last passage quoted from a given page is footnoted. Thus all preceding (unacknowledged) quotations since the preceding footnote are from the same page.

In his first section 'Faith in God the Creator', Barth explains how it is that creation is a matter of faith and why it is that Christians believe it. That it is a matter of faith is clear from the Apostles' Creed: "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth". The word credo in the confession is fundamental: creation is as much an article of faith as any other. It is faith which issues in knowledge and knowledge which in turn relies on faith. Only in the reception of, and response to, the "divine self-witness" (göttliches Selbstzeugnis) can we know that God is the Creator (der Schöpfer), and this for three reasons. In the first place, the article asserts the reality of the created order. Negatively it distinguishes God from the work and positively it affirms the reality, the real existence of what is created. But Barth points out that this has only the status of affirmation: that the world truly exists is "not demonstrable and can always be disputed". He continues:

It cannot be shown that God must have created the world, that it exists necessarily as seen in relation to Him, and that measured by His reality, it must therefore have reality, namely, its own special reality. 4

Secondly, the notion of creation is grounded in the existence of God. "Through Him it came into being and through Him it is", maintains Barth. But here again that the world exists through the creative activity of God is not "self-evident".⁵ The created order does not easily provide knowledge either of its origin or its Creator. An external world-cause is a possible hypothesis, even a pressing one, but "it is not unavoidable". Moreover, an external world-cause is not itself God. We cannot avoid the conclusion that the affirmation of God as Creator is a "bold" step of faith. Thirdly, the Christian confession of God as Creator is determined

4. CD, III, 1, p. 5.

5. CD, III, 1, p. 7.

by the "linguistic usage of Holy Scripture" in which it has its roots. We cannot rightly speak of Creator and creation outside the context of the New and Old Testaments, outside the biblical witness which is in turn an answer to the witness of Christ. The truth of the confession can only be known from inside. Apart from that "we have not even the faintest realisation of what it really speaks".

Jesus Christ as the Centre of Divine Creativity

Having established that creation is an article of faith, Barth elaborates four further facets of the biblical witness to creation. Firstly, to reiterate that a distinction must be made between any notion of a world cause, first cause or prime mover, and God the Creator. Even a "successful" postulate of the human mind is simply "not God".⁶ Secondly, the importance of this distinction becomes apparent when we realise that the agent to which the confession testifies is understood as incomparably perfect. It is not just another cause, or starting-point, and nor does it just exist. The creation of the world by God the Creator is not like any human act, and there is no other genuine point of comparison except that of the inner life of God himself. That there is "a correspondence" between the act of creation and the nature of God in himself is a "secret" revealed only by divine self-witness.⁷ Thirdly, it therefore follows that not only is the subject of the proposition "incomparable", so also is the act of creation itself. Creation is thus "in respect of its existence and essence" an "absolute gift of God".⁸ No human knowledge can know this of its own accord. If the act of creation proceeds from a God who is of his nature only as affirmed by the Christian confession, then it can be known solely through revelation and "can therefore be appropriated only

6. CD, III, 1, p. 11.

7. CD, III, 1, p. 14.

8. CD, III, 1, p. 15.

in faith".⁹ Finally, the credal statement refers to the creation of heaven and earth. This affirms that there is nothing that God did not create and nothing outside him that did not require his authorisation in order to be. And if we ask why heaven and earth? There is no answer except that God willed it this way for the self-communication of himself. Heaven and earth represent the totality, the total sum of all that is created, but the essential point is that "God's eternal Son and Logos did not will to be an angel or animal but man", argues Barth. Moreover, "this and this alone was the content of the eternal divine election of grace".¹⁰ It is thus perceived that the confession of God as Creator is inseparable from the second and third articles of belief. "We believe in Jesus Christ", concludes Barth, "when we believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth".¹¹

It is important to see that Barth reaches this conclusion because he perceives that "man is and represents the secret of the creature".¹² In order to follow the stages of Barth's argument we need to pay close attention to his elucidation of the relationship between heaven and earth in man in his lengthy footnote to this question.¹³ He begins by pointing out that the twofold view of creation, that is with a higher and a lower order, is incontestably the view of the Old and the New Testaments. "There is in this sphere of creation both a lower, smaller and visible and also an upper, larger and invisible reality", he writes. This sphere is the totality of creation. There "may be pretended but no genuine gods

9. CD, III, 1, p. 16.

10. CD, III, 1, p. 18.

11. CD, III, 1, p. 19.

12. CD, III, 1, p. 18.

13. CD, III, 1, n. pp. 19 - 22.

or lords", spirits, elements or forces other than those contained in heaven and earth as created by God. God's power extends to the higher and the lower; nothing which exists in either realm can do so except by his creative hand. But Barth goes further and emphasises the unity of both these spheres, heaven and earth, in man. "And in their centre between heaven and earth as their unity is man". Drawing upon the special creation of man in Genesis 2 and the anthropology suggested by Isaiah 45:12 and Psalm 8, Barth insists that man is set between heaven and earth and in a mysterious way represents both, indeed is the indissoluble link between them.¹⁴ Man is in this sense the "climax and goal" of the two Genesis creation sagas. Barth then asks whether Luther was right when in the Smaller Catechism he opened his elucidation of the first article with the words "I believe that God has created me and all creatures and that he has given me and maintains a body and soul, eyes, ears, and all members and every sense ...".¹⁵ Barth at first recoils at this "explicitly anthropocentric" view. He judges that the biblical pictures of man in Psalm 8, Isaiah and Job understand him rather as a secret to be discovered. "In them man has to be found, or find himself, as the secret of heaven and earth" Barth argues. In other words, man cannot posit a "naive and direct anthropocentricity" (Anthropozentrismus), assuming that he is as man the centre of the universe. On the other hand, Luther was half-right. There is an anthropocentricity, a man-centredness, at the heart of creation. And this is no less than the self-chosen centre of God. "It knows of him", writes Barth, "in the light of the person of the Messiah of Israel, of the Son of Man, in whom the man of God, uniting

14. CD, III, 1, n. p. 20.

15. Luther, Smaller Catechism, cited CD, III, 1, n. p. 21. For further evidence of Luther's Anthropozentrismus see his commentary on Rom. 8:20 where "the creature" is interpreted to "mean man", Lectures on Romans, ed. and ET by William Pauck, The Library of Christian Classics (London: SCM Press, 1961) Vol. xv, p. 237.

heaven and earth in Himself, appeared as a reality among men".¹⁶ Thus Jesus Christ is properly the secret of heaven and earth. The Old Testament pictures of man are "meaningful and practicable" only when viewed as the "promise or prototype" of this true man.¹⁷

Barth now turns to the "positive exposition" of this thesis that creation is an article of faith. How do we know that God is the Creator of heaven and earth and that they therefore have a reality distinct from him? The issue is not what rational grounds, arguments, feelings or justifications we have for positing God as Creator, or indeed what good it may do us if we do, but rather "How do we arrive at the position where we can simply say that we know that it is so?" Barth unravels the significance of this question with care. The issue is not how can we arrive at the notion of God independently, as it were, of the other articles of faith, but rather how this article makes sense or coheres with "every constituent element" of the Christian confession. How, in other words, do we know that this doctrine is "of the Word of God Himself"?¹⁸

Barth begins by indicating that it is not sufficient to point to the fact that the creation sagas can be found at the beginning of the Bible, or that a significant number of scriptural passages speak of God's creative activity. For the authority of the Bible rests in turn upon the fact that it "gives us God's own witness to Himself, that it gives us the witness to Jesus Christ". And Barth continues in a crucial step of argument:

16. CD, III, 1, n. p. 21. Barth also considered this article of Luther's Catechism at an earlier point. "Most decidedly the knowledge of God as the Creator and of man as his creature ... would not be subserved if man was going with excessive forwardness to look upon himself as ... the creature and the partner of God", Credo: A Presentation of the Chief Problems of Dogmatics with Reference to the Apostle's Creed, ET by J.S. McNab (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1936) pp. 29 - 30. Whether Barth maintains this perspective will shortly be seen.

17. CD, III, 1, n. p. 22.

18. CD, III, 1, p. 22.

Its word in all words is this Word. And it is this Word, its witness to Jesus Christ, which makes all words the infallible Word of God.¹⁹

We cannot, that is, understand the biblical witness to God the Creator without understanding the centre of that witness, namely God's disclosure of himself in the person of Jesus Christ. All hinges here on Barth's principle of interpreting Christian doctrine in terms of its centre, which is also for Barth the only sure ground of theological knowledge. All else is "confused myth" or "wild metaphysic" when viewed in this light. The "basis, norm and meaning" of creation are here revealed or we have no knowledge at all.²⁰

From this standpoint, Barth deduces a number of points which are fundamental to his understanding of the Christian confession of which the doctrine of creation is only one part. Because the centre of knowledge is God's revealing of himself, what he reveals and how he reveals it are of the utmost significance. We learn that God "does not live His divine life only in His own space" precisely because of the unity effected with man in Jesus Christ. It is only because God acts apart from his own sphere that we know creation is distinct from him in its reality. Moreover, we learn that man is also not alone, that he is the object of divine activity and also the subject of divine communication. Again, it is only in Jesus that we learn to predicate "Father" and "Creator" of God himself. Thus Barth returns to his ever-pressing theme that the doctrine of creation is a showing forth of that already existing inner relationship between the Father and the Son. From this Father-Son relationship we also learn that man is the centre of creation. "Here is humanity at the heart of the cosmos", argues Barth. "When we have discovered man as God's creature at

19. CD, III, 1, p. 23.

20. CD, III, 1, p. 25.

this point, we have made direct discovery of heaven and earth as the object of the divine act of creation".

Barth thus concludes that we know the doctrine of creation "speaks the truth" because it both exemplifies and is inseparable from the confession of the unity of God in Jesus Christ. "Where there is a genuine noetic connection", he argues, "we can always count on the fact that it has an ontic basis".²¹ Barth repeats his insistence upon the primacy of faith in Jesus Christ from which the creation doctrine proceeds. One is essential in order to render the other comprehensible: "If I did not believe the former, I could not perceive and understand the latter".²²

It should now be clear that knowledge of the Creator involves a specific orientation and confession. Not only is Jesus the indispensable link in understanding creation intellectually, he is truly with God the Creator himself. In short: "Faith in Jesus Christ is a life in the presence of the Creator".²³ It follows that the Creator has a right to rule his creation "not by subsequent acquisition but by original possession".²⁴ Faith in the Creator must recognise the Creator's right. But it must also recognise, despite appearances to the contrary, the Creator's benevolence. For "there has entered in Jesus Christ, the Bearer and Proclaimer of the benevolence of the One who willed and created the world and themselves".²⁵ In sum: creation is grace, and it sets the scene for further grace - a theme to which Barth shortly returns (see pp. 16 and 48 - 49).

We need to consider some of the implications of this opening section for our understanding of the relationship between the non-human and the human.

21. CD, III, 1, p. 28.

22. CD, III, 1, p. 29.

23. CD, III, 1, p. 32.

24. CD, III, 1, p. 36.

25. CD, III, 1, p. 38.

Firstly it is important to make clear what is implicit in his methodology. I do not propose to discuss the long-disputed question about the place of natural theology in the work of Karl Barth. There is already an enormous amount of literature concerning this area and to enter into a discussion of it now would take us beyond our terms of reference.²⁶ It is necessary, however, to get our bearings right on what is for Barth the overridingly crucial question of where to begin. For it is the question of presupposition which he openly admits in his Preface, that drove him to enter "a space in which I feel much less confident and sure". And more:

If I were not obliged to do so in the course of my general exposition of Church dogmatics, I should probably not have given myself so soon to a detailed treatment of this particular material.²⁷

And what is this presupposition? It is clearly stated in the summary foreword, and deserves to be read in full:

The insight that man owes his existence and form together with all the reality distinct from God, to God's creation, is achieved only in the reception and answer of the divine self-witness, that is, only in faith in Jesus Christ, i.e., in the knowledge of the unity of Creator and creature actualised in Him, and in the life in the present mediated by Him, under the right and in the experience of the goodness of the Creator towards His creature.²⁸

Thus summarised we see clearly that the issue posed is the question of knowledge. "How do we know ... that this is so?" This is not a question about human self-knowledge, exploration, experience or feeling primarily. The theological task is to begin at the place where God begins, or rather

26. For a vital text see Natural Theology, comprising 'Nature and Grace' by E. Brunner and the reply 'No!' by K. Barth, ET by P. Fraenkel, intro. by John Baillie (London: Geoffrey Bles, Centenary Press, 1946), and for a recent discussion see Paul Avis' 'Does Natural Theology Exist?', Theology, 87, 720 (November 1984), 431 - 437.

27. CD, III, 1, ix (preface).

28. CD, III, 1, p. 3.

the point at which he begins for us, or more precisely the point at which his centre of revealing is the point of our beginning of understanding. Barth's clear emphasis here and throughout this whole volume is to begin at the right theological point at which we shall be able to say in faith and with knowledge that this is where God is. Hence Barth speaks of the knowledge of creation as an "insight" stemming from the unique self-disclosure of God in Jesus Christ.

Two questions quickly present themselves. In the first place, does this mean that no human experience of creaturely existence, no human observation, experiment, discovery or reflection can lead to the disclosure of theological knowledge? Secondly, does this mean that theological knowledge is independent of human life and experience?

To the first, we may respond generally by saying that whilst human experience may lead to the positing of theological questions, such experiences cannot carry in themselves divine revelation. To affirm such would mean affirming a doctrine of human experience per se as revelation.²⁹ It would mean affirming God as continuous with all human development, experience and reflection. Moreover, from Barth's point of view, the question would have to be raised as to whether we have found God at all in this procedure. All hinges here on God himself being the source of his own self-disclosure and revelation. We shall not digress here to explore at this point Barth's own description of revelation as the three-fold Word, Revealed, Preached

29. A point which even well-intentioned critics of Barth appear to have enormous difficulty in grasping. I.T. Ramsey, for example, opposes Barth's work with the statement: "Now let it be granted at once that for the Christian the created world will always be a revelation of God the Creator", 'Barth - and still more Barth', The Modern Churchman, 4, 2 (January 1961) p. 137. But enormous difficulties flow from such a sweeping doctrine. We need to ask whether a priori the integrity and independence of the creature is not in fact threatened by such a doctrine. Can finite creatures (with one exception) become God's revelation and also remain creatures?

and Written.³⁰ Suffice it to say, Barth makes a distinction between revelation and witness. Human experience, especially we may add Biblical witness, in so far as it includes this, may constitute witness to revelation but not revelation itself. The method in all this is to separate and distinguish at the outset theological knowledge from human opinion. Whilst we cannot at this stage say with precision how far in this or that situation questions of human experience, in so far as they witness or otherwise to divine disclosure, may be entertained and supported throughout Barth's whole treatment of creation, we can be sure at the outset that there is a "twofold boundary" between them. "There is free scope for natural science", he writes, "beyond what theology describes as the work of the Creator". Barth is fully aware of the perplexity that his approach may cause since for many theological and scientific questions about creation are intertwined. But he insists upon their separation.

To the second question concerning the independence of theological knowledge from human life and experience, it should be clear that created, incarnate humanity has a central place in revelation and therefore in all theological knowledge. For Barth's main presupposition is that the "insight" of creation "is achieved only in the reception and answer of the divine self-witness, that is, only in faith in Jesus Christ, i.e., in the knowledge of the unity of Creator and creature actualised in Him". Hence it is the humanity of Jesus in the second person of the Trinity that truly attests the reality of creation.

30. For summary see Geoffrey W. Bromiley's An Introduction to the Theology of Karl Barth (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1979) 'The Form of the Word', pp. 6 - 8. In later years especially the primacy of the revealed Word was emphasised: "It is not so much a matter of our encountering the witness of scripture as of our encountering the one to whom the testimony of scripture bears witness", circular letter, May 1964, cited by Eberhard Busch, Karl Barth: His life from letters and autobiographical texts, ET by John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1976) p. 466.

For our purpose, it is this that holds a vital key to grappling with his work and also for our own consideration of the place of humanity and creation within it. Here is the all-important centre from which everything material in the Dogmatics flows. Barth's critics have often overlooked his conclusion to the early formative work on Anselm. "God gave himself as the object of his knowledge", he argues, "and God illumined him that we might know him as object". In a Preface to the second edition Barth makes this clear: "in this work on Anselm I am working with a vital key, if not the key, to an understanding of that whole process of thought that has impressed me more and more in my Church Dogmatics as the only one proper to theology".³¹ The relation between creation and Christ is noetic and ontic. Notionally we know of creation primarily because God has affirmed the reality of created life in himself, that is, in the incarnation of his Son, and ontologically, it is the Son who is the agent of creation, sustaining, upholding and ruling it. In simpler language, the place of the humanity of Jesus plays a vital part in (i) establishing the reality of creation itself; (ii) in giving creation its centre and goal, and (iii) determining its character and the appropriate response of man. Man is therefore the "secret of the creature", in standing mid-way between heaven and earth, in so far as the man spoken of in the credal confession speaks of the living Word of God himself and in so far as it anticipates and prefigures the incarnate life of Jesus Christ.

A Qualified Anthropocentrism?

In the light of this, we are bound to ask to what extent the status of created humanity so prefigures and determines the centre of Barth's theological method, that it overshadows the gift of created life to the rest

31. Barth, Anselm: Fides Quaerens Intellectum: Anselm's Proof of the Existence of God in the Context of his Theological Scheme, ed. by Dikran Y. Hadidian, Pittsburgh Reprint Series, 2 (London: SCM Press, 1960) The Library of Philosophy and Theology (The Pickwick Press, 1975) p. 171 and (Preface to second edition) p. 11 (my italics). See S.W. Sykes' 'Barth on the Centre of Theology' in Karl Barth: Studies of his Theological Method, op.cit., pp. 36 ff. for discussion.

of creation. Is there not here a naive Anthropozentrismus despite Barth's protests? It is too early to give an adequate answer at this stage. But the possible accusation of anthropocentricity does worry Barth. It is not theologically correct, he suggests against Luther, to begin the Smaller Catechism with an affirmation of human creation first, for it is only within the context of heaven and earth, and then only Christocentrically, that such an affirmation can be true. Man, therefore, cannot regard himself as the totality or as the sole object of creation. Man, however, properly understood as incarnation is "humanity at the heart of the cosmos: with its upper and lower aspects".³² Is this Anthropozentrismus? Only it seems in the Christologically qualified sense of God's humanity in Jesus. It is not anthropocentricity per se as though humanity plain and simple constitutes the key to theological knowledge. We shall see in what follows how far this central element in Barth's thought is applied and related to the place and status of non-humanity in creation. We shall examine closely how Barth draws the line and how far the charge of Anthropozentrismus can be sustained.

One general question from our perspective should be raised at this point. To what extent, on the basis of faith in God the Creator Christologically centred, is the place of creation, understood as heaven and earth, incidental or insignificant? Of course there is no attempt in Barth to deny the reality of created heaven and earth, or to suggest that the incarnational secret of created life precludes consideration of other aspects of creation, but as expounded so far, the question may be raised as to the significance of the created life, that is the range of beings, animate, inanimate, sensitive or otherwise, that constitute the cosmos thus created. It is instructive that in a discussion of the noetic connection between

32. CD, III, 1, p. 28.

Christ and creation he offers no statement concerning the theological significance of creation itself. Whilst he discusses in detail the failure of previous theologians to consider the Johannine text of "all things" (1:2) coming to be in Christ, he offers no explanation of what purpose "all things" may have or why their creation was necessary at all.³³ Again we must not prejudge what he will subsequently posit as the goal and meaning of creation, but from our perspective we shall be eager to ask what part does the created world play in the purpose of God disclosed? Why does the sun shine and the grass grow and the rain fall? When Barth writes that belief in Jesus Christ "contains within itself the knowledge of creation, the Creator and the creature"³⁴ we shall be concerned to ask in what follows what precise knowledge in fact can be known? What can be known about the place and status of the created world from the Christocentric theology which Barth advances?

The second major section is entitled 'Creation and Covenant', and the first subsection 'Creation, History and Creation History'. It is here that Barth seeks to explain the themes that are to be his basis for interpreting the two creation sagas.

Creation is the first in the series of divine works. It is the work that foreshadows and prefigures the rest. All the later acts are to be understood from this starting point, that God does not begrudge reality distinct from himself, that in his freedom and beneficence he gives of himself. The work of creation stands in "an indissolubly real connection" with these later works. Moreover, all these divine works and their history are a manifestation of the "eternal decision of God's will" to which they

33. Barth does not completely overlook such an important text, however. Later he treats it in detail with the help of Luther's Exposition of John (pp. 115 - 117) but his exegesis says nothing of the status of the non-human, the text is used rather to emphasise the priority of the Word.

34. CD, III, 1, p. 31.

correspond.³⁵ Creation, we have seen, is best characterised as grace, but it is also the stage for the story of the "covenant of grace".³⁶ The covenant (Bund) is the main interpretive theme of this second major section.

The recognition that lies behind the indissolubility of the notions of creation and covenant is the triune nature of God himself. God the Creator is none other than the triune God of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Only this recognition will allow for the "necessary concretely Christian form and meaning" of creation.³⁷ The article in the Creed that God the Father is the Creator is proper and right not only because there exists a likeness between man and God, but also because the Father is himself "the source of the other eternal modes of existence of the divine essence".

Hence the notion of God the Father in this respect can be understood only as the unity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.³⁸ It is of the greatest importance to Barth's theology that God the Creator should be understood only from within his own self-disclosed triune nature. He reminds us that on this view there can be no other agent responsible for the divine work, no "self-existent first cause".

Barth briefly explores what it must mean for God the Father to be the Creator of all things through his Son. The Son or Word should be understood as "the second mode" of God's inner being. One feature, or function, of the Son is that he should be "Creator ad extra",³⁹ but that alone would be an inadequate definition. It must be held together with the realisation that God the Father willed through all eternity to give his only begotten Son as an expression of his love for the world. Barth will shortly explain how it is true in a pre-eminent sense that the creation was made

35. CD, III, 1, p. 43.

36. CD, III, 1, p. 44.

37. CD, III, 1, p. 48.

38. CD, III, 1, p. 49.

39. CD, III, 1, p. 50; his italics.

for and belongs to the Son. But to develop his trinitarian understanding of the work of creation, Barth also explores the role of the Holy Spirit. With the Son, the Holy Spirit is the eternal God, indeed he is "the principle of their mutual love proceeding from both and equal in essence".⁴⁰ The task of the Holy Spirit is to complete the work of creation. He expresses the Fatherly compassion of God and witnesses to the work of Christ. The creature can only be sure of its existence because of the operation of the Holy Spirit who reveals and expresses the unity of the Father and the Son which makes creation "possible and legitimate".⁴¹

Creation History (Schöpfungsgeschichte)

Barth is insistent that the "aim" of creation is nothing less than "history". The action of God belongs to history in the same way that creation "belongs to history".⁴² While it is true that God continues to create (creatio continua), the converse is also true that creation marks the very beginning of history. Creation of its very nature cannot be a "timeless truth" for scripture does not know of such things; it speaks only of historical events within time. The fact that the creation sagas seek to relate first and foremost not only the history of the covenant, but the history of creation is highly significant. But what kind of history are the first two pages of the Old Testament? Barth rejects two possible views. The first that they are "meaningless" and the second that they are a "revealed cosmology" of a scientific or metaphysical kind. To the first, Barth protests that in this case our mental powers and abilities become the criterion for judgement, and to the second that it creates an entirely false dichotomy between the later historical revelation and the wholly unhistorical beginnings. He writes that it is "an open secret

40. CD, III, 1, p. 56.

41. CD, III, 1, p. 57.

42. CD, III, 1, p. 60. Schöpfungsgeschichte is inclusive of all creatures though Barth seldom makes this clear, sometimes it is given a specifically anthropocentric meaning, see discussion pp. 23 and 68 - 74.

what usually happens to a knowledge of God's works" when the creation sagas are treated in this way.⁴³ Barth, therefore, insists that the creation sagas are "no less history" than the "continuation which bears this character".⁴⁴ There can be no independent answers to the questions of origins, nothing can be withdrawn from the "sphere of grace" appropriated by faith.

Barth then proceeds to answer the central question. How can man know this creation history? He confronts the problems that have led many to reinterpretation of the biblical witness with these further questions:

How can this history be related? How can this history be an object of human knowledge at all? How can anyone know and say what took place there where all occurrence had its origin? How can anyone have seen and comprehended this event?⁴⁵

Barth acknowledges that the sagas are not history in the "historicist sense". Because creation history is not just one other form of history, and because it cannot be compared in principle to other types of historical events, it must follow that it is "'non-historical'" history. This must also be true of all biblical history to the extent that they relate God's activity in creation. Moreover, historical writings can "become soul-less and intolerable" to the extent that they claim to be pure history.⁴⁶ But since Barth also accepts that "only occurrences within the existent reality of nature can be historical", it follows that the creation sagas are "pre-historical history".⁴⁷ In proximity to God, all history, suggests Barth, is of this kind. But he will not give up on the claim that the sagas are still "genuine history". "We must dismiss and

43. CD, III, 1, p. 61.

44. CD, III, 1, p. 62.

45. CD, III, 1, p. 77.

46. CD, III, 1, p. 78.

47. CD, III, 1, p. 80.

resist to the very last any notion of "the inferiority of untrustworthiness or even worthlessness" of these pre-historical accounts.⁴⁸

What precisely then is the status and the nature of the biblical witness to creation? Barth concludes that they are "saga". But what is the status of saga? They are pre-historical narratives in the sense of an "intuitive and poetical picture" of what happened. Barth further accepts "divinatory and poetical" elements within these sagas which involve vision of pre-history sometimes guessed from what has already emerged.⁴⁹ Indeed, "no picture of true history" is possible without such elements.⁵⁰ However, Barth maintains that a serious distinction must be drawn between saga and "myth". While creation narratives are best characterised as saga, they do not contain myth in any form. For myth has never really concerned itself with creation as such. In creation saga we are confronted by our Maker who challenges and commands us and to whom we are responsible, which is "the direct opposite of myth".⁵¹ Whilst saga must be distinguished from "historicist" history on the one hand and myth on the other, it is nevertheless part of the biblical witness to God's self-disclosure. The sagas are not "heaven-sent declarations", insists Barth, "but human attestations of revelation".⁵²

48. CD, III, 1, n. p. 81. Interestingly enough Friedrich Schleiermacher, to whom Barth was in some ways indebted, rejects "the fable of a Golden Age previous to history". This "alleged primordial state of the world" is in actual "contradiction with the divine commission to man". This is because "man could only attain to dominion over the earth by the development of his powers". It is perhaps not surprising then that Schleiermacher has even less of a doctrine of the non-human than Barth. His overwhelming concern is for that "God-consciousness" which "may develop in every state of consciousness which has risen above the animal confusion", The Christian Faith, ed. by H.R. Mackintosh and J.S. Stewart (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1976) pp. 242 and 238. In this last respect Barth may be more indebted to Schleiermacher than he thinks, see our discussion of Descartes, pp. 262f.

49. CD, III, 1, n. p. 82.

50. CD, III, 1, p. 83.

51. CD, III, 1, p. 87.

52. CD, III, 1, p. 93.

Questions concerning the Non-Human Creation

Barth's first few pages (48 - 59) of this section, where he relates the reality of the creation to the inner life of the Godhead are of enormous significance and need to be examined more closely. Much here foreshadows the subsequent discussion of 'Creation and Covenant' to which we shall return shortly. The vital question is how Christians may affirm that God the Father is the Creator of all things through his Son. Barth is clear that the relationship between Christ and all creation cannot be one of fortuity, arbitrariness or indifference. Here we approach the very centre of God's creative power and intent. "The fact that God has regard to His son - the Son of Man, the Word made flesh", writes Barth, "is the true and genuine basis of creation". This is not to suppose some creation from necessity, but rather the expression of free love. But "a genuine necessity is constituted", argues Barth, "by the fact that from all eternity He willed so to love the world, and did so love it, that He gave His only begotten Son".⁵³

What is puzzling, therefore, is that Barth omits in his exegesis of John 1:3 any examination of what 'all' (panta, pas) may involve and mean. Of course Barth does not overlook entirely this and other 'cosmic' verses (also, especially, Col. 1. 16:16; Heb. 1.2 f), but he never confronts directly the question of how the status of all relates to the person and work of Christ. Barth argues that "it is not God or the world and their relation which is the problem of these passages, but the Lordship of Jesus Christ".⁵⁴ Hence Barth sees in these verses an underpinning of the honour and power of Christ. That granted, the question remains whether he does justice to one strand in New Testament thinking that insists upon the wholly inclusive creative work of Christ. Indeed, more than that, for

53. CD, III, 1, p. 51.

54. CD, III, 1, n. p. 53.

this strand in its various ways affirms the reconciling work of Christ having as its object "the whole universe" (Col. 1:20), the unity of all creation to be completed in Christ (Eph. 1:10) and the liberating hope of transformation for all creation (Rom. 8:21 f). This strand within the New Testament is varied, but also consistent that it requires explanation.⁵⁵ Invoking as it does the notion of Christ as the Creator and Reconciler of all that is, it cannot be held that the New Testament bears witness to God's redeeming purposes for man alone. "It is a great mistake", writes George Hendry, "to treat these passages, which are relatively few in number, as marginal speculations. It was central to the testimony of the New Testament that the particular event which occurred in Jesus Christ is co-extensive with the work of God in creation and consummation".⁵⁶

We need to explore further the nature of "flesh" as envisaged by John (1:14). Whilst there is no doubt that flesh is understood in this context to be the flesh of man, it cannot be overlooked that flesh, that is flesh and blood, is not a uniquely human possession. If God is understood at this point to be expressing his solidarity with the creature, may we not

55. Barth gives special attention to two "cosmic" verses in the context of the reconciling work of the Son, 'The Fulfilment of the Broken Covenant', The Doctrine of Reconciliation, IV, I, ET by G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1956) pp. 70 - 78. Concerning Jn. 3:16, Barth sharply distinguishes between the nature and love of God in Christ for man and the world. The Word is not "bound to it" because it does not share "His nature" and therefore there can be "no question of any claim of the cosmos to be loved" (p. 71). Concerning 2. Cor. 15:10, the reconciliation effected for the world is necessarily limited because "Atonement takes place only where there has been strife" (p. 74). In these ways Barth is freed from having to grapple with the prima facie meaning of these texts. In private correspondence years later in offering exegesis of seven "world" passages Barth makes his view clear: "In the Bible the world is all humanity", 'To N.N. Denmark', 1 March 1966 in Karl Barth Letters 1961 - 1968, ed. by J. Fangmeier and H. Stoevesandt, ET and ed. by G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1981) pp. 199/200; his italics.

56. Hendry, Theology of Nature (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1980) p. 118. He also writes: "If faith in God the creator of the world does not carry with it some understanding of creation that contains at least the possibility of an answer to the question Why? the confession is vacuous" (p. 119).

ask whether the flesh under consideration is not also at one and the same time symbolic of the fleshly bond that exists between man and all other flesh and blood within the cosmos that God has loved? It is Tertullian who most clearly grasps this when he writes of "the universe" as a "parable of the resurrection". There can be different kinds of flesh and therefore different kinds of glory but it is the same substance that will be resurrected. God says "thou shalt flourish like a phoenix (Ps. 92:12), that is, out of death, out of burial" in order that "you may believe that the substance of the body can be exacted of the flames as well" with the obvious question "shall men die once for all, while birds of Arabia are assured of their resurrection?".⁵⁷ The same needs to be asked of the suggestion in John 1:4 that "all that came to be was alive with his life". The sense of bondage and unity here with Christ and creation is unmistakable. This in no way detracts from the thrust of the Prologue to the effect that within the human condition did the glory of God reveal itself to a unique degree. But this affirmation would not be complete without a corresponding unity between Christ and all creation. For how do we understand the life "that enlivens all creation" but as a genuine gift of God bestowed on all creation by virtue of God's eternal decree in Christ? In principle this general point appears to be accepted at the outset when defining the nature of creation:

57. Tertullian, Treatise on the Resurrection, ed., ET and comm. by Ernest Evans (London: SPCK, 1960) p. 35; (para 13) on universe; pp. 156/7 - (para 52) on different kinds of flesh, and p. 35; (para 13) on the phoenix. Elsewhere Barth does consider what is meant by the assumptio carnis. "It is not merely that God willed not to be alone, but to co-exist as the Creator with the creature". But "the creature" thus assumed is solely "man - human being" and no other implication is considered. Church Dogmatics, IV, 2, The Doctrine of Reconciliation, Part Two, ET by G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1958) pp. 42 and 43.

... in the Christian concept of the creation of all things, the question is concretely one of man and his whole universe as the theatre of the history of the covenant of grace; of the totality of earthly and heavenly things as they are to be comprehended in Christ.⁵⁸

But the question remains whether Barth gives full weight to the reality, existence and purpose of the non-human in creation. The problem is compounded by Barth's habit of using the term "the creature" (das Geschöpf) in a way that suggests a wholly anthropocentric reference.⁵⁹ For example, when discussing the important place of the Spirit in the work of creation, Barth acknowledges on one hand that both man and animal exist by the gift of the breath of life within them (Gen. 7:15). "In this way" he writes, "the Holy Spirit is the inner divine guarantee (though not the Creator) of the creature". He continues, "If its existence were intolerable to God, how could it be loved and willed and made by Him?". But what "creature" are we here talking of? All his references here point to the total work of the life-guaranteeing Spirit, but these points are not examined by themselves but eventually subordinated to a wholly anthropocentric line of enquiry. Hence he can begin his discussion of creation history by positing "God wills and creates the creature for the sake of His Son or Word and therefore in harmony with Himself; and therefore for His supreme glory and therefore in the Holy Spirit". But again what is das Geschöpf here described? Later on Barth elaborates: "What is meant is the history of the covenant of grace instituted by God between Himself and man".⁶⁰

58. CD, III, 1, p. 44; my italics.

59. In general Barth uses three words das Geschöpf (any living being); das Geschaffene (anything that has been created and includes rocks, plants, etc.) and die Kreatur (animals only in normal German usage). It is the first two words that he uses most consistently, and therefore when the translators use the term "the creature" they are picking up the generally inclusive use of this phrase. This is all the more striking in the light of Barth's consistent anthropocentric meaning.

60. CD, III, 1, n. and p. 59; my italics.

This Anthropozentrismus is problematic in several ways. Does it follow, for example, that what is claimed for "the creature" can be only said of human-kind? Does it follow that the work of creation and covenant can have this sole point of reference without including at the same time the totality of creation and "the creature" in the wider sense? With these questions in mind we approach Barth's discussion of the first creation saga.

The First Saga: Surveying the Ground

The second sub-section of the second major section is entitled 'Creation as the External Basis of the Covenant' and it begins with a discussion of the necessary dependency of creation. "The creature is not self-existent", begins Barth.⁶¹ It neither exists for itself, nor has it meaning for itself, nor can it understand by itself its own purpose and destiny. The ontology of creation consists in its radical dependency on God: there can be no self-sufficiency, no complete autonomy and no intrinsic teleology. But if the divine creation does not therefore exist for itself, the question is raised: what is God's will in creating it? What was God's purpose in creation? To posit that creation was made because God "does not will to be alone in His glory", cannot mean that creation is therefore purposeless or that God creates in response to some kind of need. It is impossible to conceive of God creating as it were by necessity or by force of some external constraint. How is it then that God creates something of which he has no need? Barth is clear that the only recollection open to us is that God is free in love. He wills creation not out of "caprice or necessity" but simply because:

He has loved it from eternity, because he wills to demonstrate His love for it, and because He wills, not to limit His glory by its existence and being, but to reveal and manifest it in His own co-existence with it.⁶²

61. CD, III, 1, p. 94.

62. CD, III, 1, p. 95.

This Christological basis for the justification of creation will become increasingly apparent as Barth unfolds the meaning of creation and covenant. He insists that the divine purpose as here perceived cannot be content with the mere being or existence of creation. Divine love "wills something with and for that it loves", and hence the existence of creation when viewed aright always points beyond itself to the further acts of fulfillment and completion. Scripture asks of us to consider this divine purpose within creation and to see it as the external basis of the covenant relationship. It is important to bear in mind that creation "is not itself the covenant" (die Schöpfung ist nicht selbst der Bund).⁶³ The inner basis of creation, as Barth will expound it, is the inner life of God himself. Creation is indeed grace, but in the light of the purposes of God it must also be seen as preparing for the fullness of grace to come.

The first saga (Gen. 1:1 - 2:4a) begins by asserting the priority and sovereignty of God which stands at the beginning of all existence (Gen. 1:1). There is no possibility of dualism here. The world is not an accident or a result of pre-existent random forces. Dualism, even in a limited form as "chaos", cannot be allowed from the concept of "darkness" found in verse two. While creation is not divine, God did not create it as a rival force, it is not "ungodly or antigodly".⁶⁴ The separation of light from darkness (Gen. 1:3 - 5) is the first work of his Word, but only in this separation is darkness also created. God's work takes place on the day which is the sign of light, and this light once it has refuted darkness "cannot be reversed but only continued".⁶⁵ Moreover, light is not an independent principle, it is a creature of God. Barth sees in the concept

63. CD, III, 1, p. 97.

64. CD, III, 1, p. 102.

65. CD, III, 1, p. 118.

of light a "prototype" of God's revelation, a sign of the knowledge of God. The light of day enables the living space of man to be created (Gen. 1:6 - 8). The existence of water, which Barth sees as the "enemy" of all life,⁶⁶ is bound and separated by the firmaments of heaven and earth. The separation of sea from land now follows (Gen. 1:9 - 13) which corresponds to the separation of light and darkness. Barth emphasises that the "dry and habitable land" which emerges is a positive act of God's will, but the sea remains as a sign of "averted threat" and the ever present possibility of chaos.⁶⁷ The third day sees the vegetable kingdom emerging in obedience to the Word of God (Gen. 1:11f). The backcloth to the creation of man is now accomplished. When man emerges it will be seen that all has been made ready for him. He is the "most necessitous of all creatures", adds Barth.⁶⁸

The fourth day sees the creation of the vital elements within the cosmos (Gen. 1:14 - 19). The lights in the firmament are not mere decoration or incidental to the heavenly purpose. Barth views them as sources for the objective mediation of God's message and this especially for man. Not only do they help man to orientate his life, showing him the boundaries of his existence, but they are also signs of the enlightening grace of God to come. The fifth work concerns the creation of living creatures and their receipt of blessing (Gen. 1:20 - 23). "These things seem to be blessed by being what they are", Barth surmises on his understanding that a blessing is an authorisation to follow one particular action rather than another.⁶⁹ In the case of creatures their principal purpose is the generation of new lives.

66. CD, III, 1, p. 133.

67. CD, III, 1, p. 142.

68. CD, III, 1, p. 143.

69. CD, III, 1, p. 170.

We now move to the climax of the narrative in the creation of man (Gen. 1:24 - 31). The beasts created will be inferior, yet also his companions and even forerunners (Vorläufer). Moreover, "man's salvation and perdition, his joy and sorrow, will be reflected in the weal and woe of this animal environment and company".⁷⁰ There are important similarities and dissimilarities between the creation of animals and man. Both take place on the same day, both exist by divine intention, both are blessed with man's blessing, but hence "burdened" with the same "curse man has to carry".⁷¹ Everything in the creation of animals points beyond them to the place of man. All other creatures have only a copy or character of the divine likeness (Gleichnis) which is God's special "image" in man. Creation apart from man is something other than God, but not a counterpart of God.

The notion of God's image in man requires some amplification. This image is not a human quality, or in any way an attribute consisting in man's capacities or activities. Rather "It consists as man consists as the creature of God".⁷² The fact that he is man means that he is made in the image of God; without this image, he could not be what he essentially is. Man therefore is a "repetition" of the divine life; "its copy and reflection". If we ask why this is so, Barth answers that nothing less could satisfy the desire of God to have a true partner and counterpart, to have "a genuine but harmonious self-encounter and self-discovery". Because of this, there exists an analogy between God and man. An analogy not of being but of "tertium comparationis, of free differentiation and relation".⁷³ In this respect Barth emphasises the sexual differentiation in the making of man male and female. Human beings exist in plurality and in relationship with others. This relationship of differentiation is the true humanum

70. CD, III, 1, p. 178.

71. CD, III, 1, n. p. 181.

72. CD, III, 1, p. 184.

73. CD, III, I, p. 185,

of their divine image.⁷⁴ This characteristic which man shares with animals has in his case a special significance of witness to God's own form of being.

Integral to the divine life within their creaturely being, God has given man an "exalted" position of dominion over the plant and animal kingdoms.⁷⁵ This superiority is exercised by "a higher dignity and might", and "by a greater power of disposal and control". But creatures by virtue of their comradeship with man are also "witnesses and to that extent partakers" of the special divine image given to man. Barth is clear that no more than this can be read into the notion of man's dominion over the earth. Man has not created them and he cannot exercise an absolute lordship over them. The limitations ("internal and external") on man's lordship involve him being as a representative to them (als Vertreter) as well as a primus inter pares in relation to them. Man does not have the "right of capital punishment", that is, the power of life and death over them.⁷⁶ Apart from the grace of the image of God, man and animals are not radically different.

Gen. 1:29 - 31 concerns the juridical declaration by God regarding nourishment for man and beast. "Behold I have given you every plant yielding seed ... ". A diet which appears to exclude flesh. "Whether or not we find it practicable or desirable", writes Barth, "the diet assigned to man and

74. CD, III, 1, p. 186.

75. Barth makes no mention of the other apparent references to man's dominion in the "nature Psalms", 8 and 104. Earlier discussion in the Dogmatics shows that he regards these as speaking directly of Christ. "If this Jesus is actually the man in the cosmos of Ps. 8, the estimate is true, which otherwise could only be described honestly as false." It is a pity that Barth does not develop in this present volume the insight of Jesus as "man in the cosmos" and with it the notion of creation as "the theatre of revelation", Church Dogmatics, II, 1, The Doctrine of God, Part One, ET by T.H.L. Parker, W.B. Johnston, H. Knight and J.L.M. Haire (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1957) pp. 113 and n. p. 118.

76. CD, III, 1, p. 187.

beasts by God the Creator is vegetarian".⁷⁷ The superiority of man does not extend to taking life for food. But Barth is keen to stress that the sense in which the saga speaks of this decree is in terms of the peace (Friede) of creation.⁷⁸ The first original order between man and animals did not envisage the survival of one life at the expense of another. Only the later order, itself dependent upon the old, sanctions a "new regulation of relationship" whereby the sacrifice of animals becomes a sign of reconciliation. On this presupposition, "but only this", the later sacrificial tradition and "therefore carnivorousness" is justifiable.⁷⁹

The completion of the sixth day ends with the statement that God saw that his creation was "very good" (Gen. 1:31). But in what sense? The precise significance of this is discussed at length in Barth's later treatment of creation "as benefit" (300ff.), but here he simply points to the "unmistakable" answer, namely that in the making of the cosmos God fulfilled his purposes in the actualisation of man in relationship with him. Man is the "proper inhabitant" of the world and a "partner who knows light as light and can have dealings with God".⁸⁰

Barth now turns to the final verses where God is seen as resting after the work of creation (Gen. 2:1 - 2). This, he maintains, is a "special divine act" on the seventh day. For what we have revealed here is not merely a finishing piece or a superfluous act, but theology of the greatest significance. On God's side it means positively that he was pleased with his creation:

77. CD, III, 1, p. 208. Cf. Robin Attfield: "Only after the Fall and the Flood were human beings authorised to eat flesh, as if the society which transmitted and edited the Genesis narratives was uneasy about meat-eating and sensed that a special justification was needed", The Ethics of Environmental Concern (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983) p. 25. For Barth again on vegetarianism, see pp. 274-6 and discussion p.305f.

78. CD, III, 1, p. 209.

79. CL, III, 1, p. 210.

80. CD, III, 1, p. 212/3.

He was really satisfied to enter into this relationship with this reality distinct from Himself, to be the Creator of this creature, to find these works of His Word the external sphere of His power and grace and the place of His revealed glory.⁸¹

On man's side, the seventh day represents an invitation to share in the "freedom", "rest" and "joy" of the Sabbath.⁸² In this way we see how the final act of the history of creation gives way to the first act of covenant history. Before man had begun the work assigned to him, he is summoned by God to share with him in the goal of creation's existence "which cannot be attained by toil and conflict". At this point man is left completely in the hands of God's grace. Here begins the "history of man with God".⁸³

From this brief survey of the ground before us we need now to isolate and explore those areas concerning the status of creation and its relationship with man in further detail.

(i) God's love for creation

From the outset Barth seeks to get his bearings right. "What was and is the will of God" in creating? The only inner necessity that can be satisfactorily posited is that of love. But that alone would be insufficient definition. God loves to a purpose; he wills not only to love creation, but also "to demonstrate His love for it" and to reveal his own "co-existence" (zusammen sein) with it.⁸⁴ The glory (Herrlichkeit) of creation then is the glory that God wills and executes within it. Divine love, maintains Barth, creates its own presupposition. Without understanding the will of God in loving his creation, the notion of divine love is vacuous.

81. CD, III, 1, pp. 214/5; his italics.

82. CD, III, 1, p. 217.

83. CD, III, 1, p. 95.

84. CD, III, 1, p. 95.

What we have to hold before ourselves therefore is the eternal will of God which determines and prefigures the act of creation. How far does this providence extend? To man? To animals? To every living creature? All creation in principle points to the purpose of God. "There is no peculiarity in man and the world", he writes, "which does not as such aim at this covenant."

(ii) God's covenant relationship

It is vital to remember that Barth distinguishes between creation and covenant at the outset (but see later, especially pp. 112-- 113). "The existence and being of the creature willed and constituted by God are the object and the presupposition of His love", but the creature is not itself the covenant. The inner basis of the covenant is God's free choice and eternal decree to manifest himself within creation. God's Son is "the Representative" (Vertreter) of all creation.⁸⁵ Creation is thus only the "external basis" of the fullness of grace to come. How far and to what extent non-human creation is included in this covenant relationship is yet to be defined. But we shall be interested to learn how far the activity of God in his Son is "representative", as Barth suggests, of all creation.

(iii) The creation of the light (1:3)

The first command of God was to create light and separate it from darkness. For Barth this has particular Christological significance. The Word of God in creation is manifested at the very beginning: "the creature in its totality was allied to this living divine purpose being wholly referred

85. CD, III, 1, p. 97. Barth uses this term to describe both Christ and man in relationship to creation (see pp. 6, 166, 254f., 293).

to it for its existence and essence, its survival and sustenance".⁸⁶

Here Barth gives some definition to those opening verses from John's Prologue (John 1:3f) for God "wills to draw us to Himself, to reconcile us to Himself and finally to redeem us (making a new heaven and a new earth and ourselves its inhabitants)" and this is "promised in creating heaven and earth and ourselves by His Word".⁸⁷ Natural light is a creature of God and is full of symbolic power. Light, its increase and its drawing towards new and fuller light, is "the symbol of the revelation of grace".⁸⁸

(iv) The separation of the waters (1:6 - 8)

This second act is essential to allow for the "actual establishment of order proclaimed by the creation of light". Water, unless held back, can become like the forces of darkness which will not allow life to breathe and multiply. "It is this power as such", writes Barth, "which is radically broken by the creative work of the second day".⁸⁹ The waters thus separated create the possibility of dry land and the habitation of the earth.

(v) The creation of vegetation (1:11 - 13)

With the creation of plants and trees which in turn are given authority to live and reproduce themselves, the narrative moves towards the fullness of God's creative work. But what is the purpose of vegetable life? For what reason do plants bear seed, fruit trees bear fruit and the earth produce fresh growth? Barth's answer appears to take a threefold form: (1) God's purposes; (2) man's purposes, and (3) their own purposes.

86. CD, III, 1, p. 110.

87. CD, III, 1, p. 116.

88. CD, III, 1, p. 119.

89. CD, III, 1, p. 113.

(1) Created life is made for God's glory (Herrlichkeit). This is both its telos and function - to serve the purposes of the Lord. When he writes "creation in itself and as such did not and does not take place for its own sake" the wider purposes of God himself are presupposed. But since "God does not will to be alone in his glory" it must follow that he seeks the creation of beings who can share and reflect that Herrlichkeit in their creaturely being.⁹⁰ It must also follow that nothing in the creation can be arbitrary, indifferent or incidental to God's intention. Barth appears to grasp this even when considering the later injunction to man and beast to use vegetables as food (Gen. 1:29). "What is proclaimed in this teleology of creation", he writes, "is not the glory of man but the glory of the God who has turned to him in His mercy". It is "the table of the Lord" to which man is invited and admitted. The sovereignty of man involves gratitude for their existence "as the indispensable presupposition of his own" but also in a strange way involves the humility of the "highest" over the "lowest" creation. Precisely because man is dependent upon vegetable creation we see "prefigured in nature" the order of grace "in which only the last can be first, but the first must be, and remain, and continually becomes the very last".⁹¹

(2) But Barth is equally, if not more insistent, that vegetable life exists to serve man and his purposes. Vegetable life "must be presupposed for the life of man and beast", and again, "the question at stake in the second half of the third day is this presupposition and with it the material foundation of the history of which the earth is destined to be the theatre".⁹² Thus Barth writes in his summary of the 'Creation and Covenant' section: "... the meaning of creation is to make possible the

90. CD, III, 1, p. 95.

91. CD, III, 1, p. 114.

92. CD, III, 1, n. p. 152.

history of God's covenant with man which has its beginning, its centre and its culmination in Jesus Christ".⁹³ We shall return to these words for consideration at later points (pp.68-70 and 128-9) but at this stage we need to note how anthropocentrically the life of creation is here understood. The overriding theological intention is to see created non-human life as subordinate to man's creation and salvation.

(3) But there are hints that Barth is not entirely sure about the apparent exclusiveness of his concerns here. Whilst, when discussing the establishment of the earthly realm from darkness and chaos, he refers almost casually to the creation of man and "his world",⁹⁴ there are later indications that plant life may have its own purposes. Hence "The plant is undoubtedly created for its own sake as well", adds Barth in a crucial step of elaboration.⁹⁵ But he goes no further. He does not examine more closely the hesitation expressed by his putting terms like "highest" and "lowest" in quotation marks. Moreover, in a lengthy discussion of vegetable life he acknowledges that it (and trees) "were there without him and before him" and thus "they also had and have their own dignity and justification". But subsequently he sees the allocation of vegetable life as food for man and beast as confirmation of their original purpose.⁹⁶

This tension in Barth's examination of the status of non-human life is shown more clearly in his understanding of the "goodness" (Gen. 1:13) of this life. In what does the goodness of vegetable life consist? "It is all good" writes Barth, "because ... it all prepares and prefigures (vorbilden) the history which is to take place on earth and because as this preparation and prefiguration it corresponds to the will and the Word

93. CD, III, 1, p. 42; my italics.

94. CD, III, 1, p. 109.

95. CD, III, 1, p. 143.

96. CD, III, 1, n. pp. 152 and 193.

of God".⁹⁷ Thus vegetable life is largely seen as a prefiguring of the covenant of grace. No other understanding of goodness is deduced or elaborated.

(vi) The creation of the greater lights (1:14 - 19)

What is their purpose and significance? Do plants and trees need them? No. Do animals need them? Yes, but in a qualified sense.⁹⁸ Does man need them? Undoubtedly.

As a repetition and representation of the divine creation of light, they prepare the cosmos not merely for the presence of man but for his activity as the earthly subject of the history appointed for him by God.⁹⁹

The central thrust, once again, is that the cosmos revealed serves the dual purpose of man with God and man for God.

(vii) The creation of fish and birds (1:20 - 23)

These are the "first autonomous living creatures", argues Barth. We have here "a first intimation" of the all important creation of man in God's image.¹⁰⁰ These creatures belong to the outer circle of grace and receive God's blessing. Divine blessing is necessary "especially if it is to continue and multiply in new individuals".¹⁰¹ Barth's definition here strikes an odd note especially in relation to the vegetable kingdom which also had the authorisation to reproduce themselves "according to its kind" (1:11). What is certainly clear, however, is that birds and fish have "authorisation and promise". That is, they have explicit

97. CD, III, 1, n. p. 156.

98. CD, III, 1, p. 157.

99. CD, III, 1, n. p. 162; my italics.

100. CD, III, 1, p. 168.

101. CD, III, 1, p. 170.

approval and power to be what in their own terms they can be. Barth acknowledges that, from his perspective, the prefigurings of the covenant of grace begin "in fact at the very point we should least expect them".¹⁰²

In a further explanatory section, Barth locates the need for blessing in "independent creaturely movements".¹⁰³ Fish and birds have not only the capacity to reproduce themselves, but also to move and realise themselves in movement and significantly to give praise to the Creator.¹⁰⁴ But he insists that the creation of blessed creatures provides for the "possibility and reality of natural history", and therefore "the preservation ... of the earth as a dwelling place for man".¹⁰⁵ Thus once again the purpose of this creation must be seen primarily in relation to man. For God "has really blessed the beasts as a prelude and prefiguration of his special dealings with man". Barth also limits the notion of divine address to animals. Against Calvin, he maintains that this would be an impossibility since animals cannot make a decision and are therefore incapable of disobedience. They cannot be summoned because they cannot decide. But it must also follow that animals are to that extent obedient to the Word of God. If disobedience cannot take the completion of God's will within them, it must follow that their existence per se is a sign of triumph and goodness. (Barth, incidentally, sees no scriptural support for preaching to the birds after the example of St. Francis and St. Anthony. Animals can only be "a passive and not an actively participating witness to God's grace".¹⁰⁶)

102. CD, III, 1, p. 170/1.

103. CD, III, 1, p. 174.

104. CD, III, 1, p. 172.

105. CD, III, 1, p. 174; my italics.

106. CD, III, 1, p. 175; my italics.

(viii) The creation of animals (24 - 26)

The creation of "living creatures according to their kind" with the creation of man himself on the sixth day marks the inner circle of creation. We draw near to the "climax" of the saga, though not yet its conclusion which marks the seventh day. What has Barth to say about the creation of animals? Firstly, they are man's companions. Man needs the animals "whereas they for their part have no need of him whatever". Secondly, they offer to man "the spectacle of submission" to God in his word. In that sense:

The creature precedes man in a self-evident praise of its Creator, in the natural fulfilment of the destiny given to it at its creation, in the actual humble recognition of its creatureliness.

Thirdly, animals maintain their own animal nature "with its dignity and also its limitation".¹⁰⁷

(ix) The image of God in man (26 - 28)

The whole of creation is seen as a prefiguring of and a preparation for this creature who is understood "as the true occupant of the house founded and prepared by God".¹⁰⁸ Man, unlike all creation, is the true counterpart of God. We may glimpse in creation signs and symbols of this possibility, "But not until the creation of man does it find a genuine and clearly visible form". From this it follows that a genuine "I - Thou" relationship with God is possible. There actually exists with man a divine relationship and encounter.¹⁰⁹ This is not a human quality, attribute or

107. CD, III, 1, p. 177.

108. CD, III, 1, p. 181.

109. CD, III, 1, p. 184.

discovery; it is the ground of man's very being itself. Man has to be defined as the being with whom God has determined to relate, copy and bind himself within his very self. Barth finds support for this in the creation of man as male and female (v 28) and we shall examine this shortly in our final summary of this section.

(x) Man's dominion over animals (28 - 29)

Barth does not see any direct theological relation between man made in God's image and his "exalted position of lordship" (Herrschaft).¹¹⁰ There is some evidence for supposing a relationship of this kind and certainly man's dominion is in some way a consequence of his divine likeness. But man's divine likeness does not consist, nor can it be described, in terms of his dominion. Barth here flies in the face of considerable agreement among Old Testament scholars who insist upon a fundamental relationship between the image and the work of dominion. "It is precisely in his function as ruler", argues Hans Walter Wolff, "that he is God's image". "In the ancient East the setting up of the king's statue was the equivalent to the proclamation of his domination" and accordingly man is seen as "God's statue" exercising authority and "fulfilling his task not in arbitrary despotism but as a responsible agent".¹¹¹ This setting of the dominion concept within the limits of kingship theology has vital implications for our understanding of our place in nature. "Man would fail in his royal office of dominion over the earth", writes Claus Westermann, "were he to exploit the earth's resources to the detriment of the land, plant life, animals, rivers and seas."¹¹² "In both the Old Testament creation stories",

110. CD, III, 1, p. 187.

111. Wolff, Anthropology of the Old Testament, ET by Margaret Kohl (London: SCM Press, 1974) p. 160/1; my italics. See also Barth's discussion of Delitzsch and Jacob, CD, III, 1, pp. 194 - 197.

112. Westermann, Creation, ET by John J. Scullion (London: SPCK, 1974) p. 52. Westermann insists that the subjection spoken of in saga one "in no wise implies exploitation" (p. 52).

summarises John Austin Baker, "we have the picture of man, the ideal king, God's perfect vice-regent, under whom nature is fertile and peaceful and all she was meant to be".¹¹³ Barth insists, however, that non-human creation is not excluded from the mystery and promise of creation by this intended relationship with man. Rather it "describes the manner of its (the non-human) inclusion".

In this way, in basic subordination to man, and as his comradely followers and environment, they too are witnesses and to that extent partakers of the divine image and the history promised to him with his special creation.

And further:

More than this must not be read into man's dominion over beasts. Man is not their creator; hence he cannot be their absolute lord, a second God.¹¹⁴

Barth thus delineates man's prerogatives with care. Man is "God's creaturely witness and representative to them". He can "carry out a commission" but his rights do not extend to the taking of life and thus man's lordship has "internal and external limitations". Man may well be inferior to animals in some aspects of life held in common. Moreover rationality is

113. Baker, 'Biblical Attitudes to Nature' in *Man and Nature*, ed. Hugh Montefiore (London: Collins, 1975) pp.93/4. Cf. Gustaf Wingren: "The imposition of these limits on man is implied in the terms 'dominion' or 'lordship', which state the nature of man's relation to Creation and show him his proper place within this Creation. Whatever freedom man may have in the exercise of his dominion, he is at the same time a servant of the Creator. The more he exercises dominion, the more he obeys", *Creation and Law*, ET by Ross Mackenzie (Edinburgh and London: Oliver Boyd, 1961) p. 106; my italics. For supporting discussions see James Barr, 'Man and Nature: The Ecological Controversy in the Old Testament', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 55 (1972) 9 - 23, and F.B. Welbourne's 'Man's Dominion', *Theology*, 78 (1975) 561 - 8. In the light of all this, perhaps Keith Ward's paraphrase of Genesis 1, namely that man is made a "god" in creation and that creatures "should serve him" needs rewriting, *The Promise* (London: SPCK, 1980) p. 2. Perhaps it should be that man given lordship or god-like power should serve creation.

114. *CD*, III, 1, p. 87.

not the central distinguishing factor.¹¹⁵

What distinguishes him and gives him authority and power is the fact that, although he is not radically different from the other creatures with independent life, he has been honoured by the grace of God to be the image of God in the uniqueness of his plurality as male and female.¹¹⁶

Barth finds support for this view in the fact that even after the giving of dominion, man still requires "the special blessing of God for the exercise of his lordship". Man's very proximity to God at this point, that is the exercise of power over creation, would be "insolent" without divine authorisation.¹¹⁷ Barth develops this point in a lengthy footnote where in seeming contrast to Calvin he resists the conclusion that animals belong to man:

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115. "Nor is any mention made in this connexion of his (man's) rationality as a feature which distinguishes him from them", CD, III, 1, p. 188 - a significant statement in the light of subsequent emphases, see pp. 260f.
116. James Barr appears to reject absolutely any "referential meaning" of the phrase "image of God" (selem 'elohim). "From this operation, which from its effects in this instance might be termed the blood-out-of-a-stone process, it comes to be decided that the image of God in man consists in his reason and intellectual capacity, or in his upright physical posture ... or in his bisexual nature as man and woman ... ". Barr's own answer, however, appears to confirm the puzzle. "To these profound questions" there is "no answer", because there is "no reason to believe that this writer(P) has in his mind any definite idea about the content or the location of the image of God", 'The Image of God in the Book of Genesis - A Study in Terminology', Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, 51, 1, (Autumn 1968) pp. 12/3.
117. CD, III, 1, p. 188.

It is not said, and cannot be said, that the beasts belong to man, for 'the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein'.¹¹⁸

What then is given to man? " ... divine destiny and promise of this lordship", writes Barth. The crux of the question is not what man has been given but what God has given to man. The order and priority of this gift is crucial for Barth. Even the very highest that man wishes to claim for himself has the status of gift and with it profound responsibilities. He writes:

In the history of this covenant it becomes true that man was created, not to be the lord of creation, but to be a lord in creation and in token of this to be lord over the beasts.

Interestingly enough the Herrschaft of Christ, which is the true subject of the discussion here, discloses itself in self-costly love, and it is precisely this lordship (so the inevitable conclusion must run) that man is enjoined to exercise. Barth recognises this in principle for he writes that the "biblical creation saga had no occasion to speak of any other lordship of man over animals than the one actualised along this line".¹¹⁹ But he fails to spell out at this vital juncture the nature of the lordship he envisages. For if the Herrschaft entrusted to man is derived from the Herrschaft of Christ in creation, then it must consist in the same moral exemplar as that of Christ. The unique and special function of man within the cosmos, as bearer of the divine likeness, is to share the costly

118. CD, III, 1, n. p. 205. Calvin clearly thought that the universe was made for man's sake, as is illustrated by this line from his discussion of divine providence: "But because we know that the universe was established especially for the sake of humankind, we ought to look for this purpose in his governance also". Institutes of the Christian Religion, ed. by J.T. McNeill, ET by F.L. Battles, The Library of Christian Classics, Vol. III (London: SCM Press, 1961) Book I, ch. XVI p. 204. A view which Barth appeared to endorse in 1936: "No doubt it is scriptural to say that the world was created for man's sake", Credo, ET by J.S. McNab (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1936) p. 33.

119. CD, III, 1, n. p. 206; my italics.

loving of Christ so as to realise within the created world the divine purpose. It is strange that Barth for all his Christologically centred theology, should fail to articulate at this point the vital moral content of man's dominion in Christological terms. He recognises that man's lordship is not and cannot be absolute; it is set within limits and boundaries and requires explicit authorisation. The final reference in this section to Hebrews 2:5 rightly linking the vicarious suffering of Christ to his crowning and honour, offers an unmistakable pointer to how man's own lordship should be exercised and the responsibility and cost of exercising it.

(xi) Nourishment for man and beast (29 - 31)

The juridical divine command that man and animals should eat vegetation (and only the superfluity of it at that) raises difficulties for Barth. He grants its authority, and as a sign of the generous hand of God in supplying sustenance for all that lives. But as for the restriction on the exercise of dominion he sees here only an affirmation of the original peace (Friede) of creation as made by God. "We must not be scandalised if we find it difficult or impossible to imagine the execution of this decree given to men and beasts", argues Barth, "the only important thing is to ask in what sense the saga speaks of this decree".¹²⁰ We may fail to understand Barth's reticence here. Of all the commands given and described this alone merits heavy qualification. Is it the obvious sense of these verses that they wish to speak of "peace between the Creator and creatures, and peace among the creatures themselves"?¹²¹ Or is Barth here involved in gloss? One implication with which he does not wrestle is that the possibility of killing, denied in the exercise of lordship, affirms the value of each independent animal

120. CD, III, 1, p. 208.

121. CD, III, 1, p. 209.

life over and above that of plants and trees. It underlines their value even within the circle of man's special value. Far from simply indicating some original or initial harmony of creation, these verses speak of divinely appointed limits within the already granted authorisation to man. Barth should not avoid the possibility that these verses testify to the closeness of animal and human-kind and to their distinct, yet complementary, value to God.

Barth, however, understands this command primarily in relation to the further command which explicitly gives man the right to kill animals for food:

It thus presupposes (the second command) an original order from which this divine arrangement stands out as an extraordinary new regulation of the relationship; a rule which is certainly broken but also confirmed by this arrangement.

But Barth's view here is only tenable if his understanding of animal sacrifice is also right. His section needs to be read in full:

The new order of relationship commencing with the dawn of this period, the introduction of capital jurisdiction between creature and creature, will not in any sense signify a kind of divine submission to creaturely degeneration. It will receive at once a very definite, positive meaning. The content and supreme fulfilment of the covenant of grace will consist in the reconciliation of man by capital jurisdiction. It is with a view to this that the animal is now sacrificed, i.e. that the surrender of its life is demanded and accepted by God as the substitutionary sign for the forfeited life of man, and therefore as a sign of his reconciliation accomplished by God; that the animal is smitten and slain; that the life - not of beasts of prey but of "innocent" domestic animals which have no part in the mutual slaughter, and not of these indiscriminately but only certain "clean" animals - is offered up by man for man at the command of God, and their flesh is then eaten in this context ... It presupposes, therefore, that God demands and will accept the surrender of the life of an animal for that of man as a

substitutory sign, and man's participation in the reconciliation thereby signified.¹²²

But has Barth at this point a sufficiently adequate conception of animal sacrifice? The theology of sacrifice is a notoriously difficult subject and a variety of interpretations abound.¹²³ Observers of the debate often remark how difficult and seemingly inconsistent it is to harmonise the value and goodness of God's creation with the divine command to destroy it albeit for sacrificial purposes. But such an inconsistency is only possible if sacrifice is understood wholly and exclusively in terms of the slaying death of animal life. Barth's emphasis too upon the "surrender" and thereby "substitutory sign" of animal life is arguably in the same vein. "The actual issue in the dispute", writes Frances Young, "is whether the essential act of sacrifice was the death of the victim or the offering of lifeblood" and she concludes that much evidence shows how "the idea that the animal died in the offerer's stead is unfounded".¹²⁴ For we have to reckon here with the possibility that animal sacrifice for all its seeming contradictions actually affirmed the value of animal creation, that is, instead of requiring the simple death of created life actually liberated

122. CD, III, 1, p. 210; my italics. There may be hints of Luther in Barth's line here. Adam "would not have used the creatures as we do today" writes Luther. The descendants of Adam would have exercised their power over animals principally "for the admiration of God and a holy joy which is unknown to us in this corrupt state of nature". But after the Fall and the Flood "the animals are subjected to man as to a tyrant who has absolute power over life and death". This is an "extraordinary gift" from God which shows how he is "favourably inclined and friendly toward man", Luther's Works, ed. by Janoslav Pelikan (St Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958) Vol I, p. 71 and Vol II, pp. 132 - 133. Barth follows Luther especially in seeing "the new arrangement" as a sign of God's generosity towards man.

123. For a concise summary see 'The Forms and Meaning of Sacrifice', ch 4 of H.H. Rowley's Worship in Ancient Israel: Its Forms and Meaning (London: SPCK, 1967) pp. 110 - 143 and for useful background to the cults, Helmer Ringgren's Israelite Religion, ET by David Green (London: SPCK, 1969) pp. 166 - 178.

124. Young, The Use of Sacrificial Ideas in Greek Christian Writers from the New Testament to John Chrysostom, Patristic Monograph Series, 5 (Philadelphia: The Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1979) pp. 54 and 56.

it for new life with God.¹²⁵ Such a view, paradoxical as it appears to some, is arguably the most plausible account of animal sacrifice as practised in Hebrew society. Now if this interpretation stands, then a far more radical recasting of the material needs to be offered. Far from suggesting the expendability of animal life for human penitence, the practice actually affirms the value and enduring life of animals themselves. It means that God's first prefiguring work of reconciliation begins not with man, but with the animal creation. It is not just that they become a sign of reconciliation within the human sphere, but that God uses them to become the efficacious agents of his reconciling work. This point is underlined when one appreciates the Christological climax to this sacrificial system. As with animal sacrifice it is not simply the death of Christ, but also his life, obedience and witness that constitute the reconciling work of God. The idea that God delights in the death of his creatures, human or animal, fundamentally misunderstands the system of animal sacrifice and, more importantly, the death of Christ.¹²⁶

Does Barth avoid this crude understanding of animal sacrifice? Perhaps not. In the first place, he nowhere indicates the value of animal creation directly in this process. Secondly, and more importantly, he does not draw out the significance of the reconciling work of God as prefigured in animal sacrifice for the animals themselves. To be fair, he points in

125. Cf. "(T)he basic meaning of sacrifice is not the destruction of the creature but its offering to God for his acceptance in joyful homage", E.L. Mascall reviewing work by Eugene Masure (also R.K. Yerkes), Corpus Christi: Essays on the Church and the Eucharist (London: Longmans, 1965) p. 89.

126. It also ignores the developing tradition of moral criticism reflected in Deuteronomy, the Psalms, the Wisdom Literature and of course the Prophets (for a masterful analysis see Young, op. cit., pp. 57 - 66) which suggests at the very least divergent interpretations of the practice. "So it was that Judaism was able to develop from a religion in which sacrifice played a most important part to a religion in which sacrifice had no place", op. cit., p. 69. For a brief but illuminating exchange see Robert Dobbie's 'Sacrifice and Morality in the Old Testament', The Expository Times, 17 (October 1958) pp. 297 - 300 and H.H. Rowley's reply 'Sacrifice and Morality: A Rejoinder', The Expository Times, 17 (March 1959) pp. 341 - 342.

his footnote to the "final era" which will bring "redemption and perfection and also general peace" for all creation.¹²⁷ But there is here a whole unexplored realm of the status of animal life used for the reconciling purposes of God. For to follow Barth's earlier point that animals do not belong to man but to God, it must also follow that God's prerogative and purposes for the animal world are higher and more determined than Barth's exegesis would admit. It means that while on one hand, man is denied rights to animal life for his own food, such rights may be allowed if they cohere with God's positive work of reconciliation with which man is commanded to co-operate. In this sense Barth does not need to posit one command breaking another, or a "new regulation" of relationship, since what is essential to the sacrificial system is not the death of the animals concerned but new life as is ultimately mirrored in the reconciling work of God in Christ.

(xii) The Seventh Day (Gen. 2:1 - 3)

We reach the climax of the narrative. As we have seen it is not the creation of man, or the making of man male and female, or the giving of the divine likeness that constitute the climax of the Schöpfungsgeschichte, but the invitation to share with God his Sabbath rest, joy and promise.

Barth concludes his final main paragraph in this way:

Creation took place in order that man's history might commence and take place as the history of the covenant of grace established between God and himself. According to the first biblical witness it took place because God's love for man willed to be incomparably strong in the fact that man and his whole world and therefore the object of God's love should become God's creation and therefore belong from the very outset to God ... It is in this teleology that it is presented in the first creation narrative of the Bible.¹²⁸

127. CD, III, 1, p. 211.

128. CD, III, 1, p. 219; my italics.

What is most puzzling about this final affirmation as well as throughout this last section as a whole is the consistent anthropocentric frame of reference. This does not mean that Barth denies that the entire creation rested on the Sabbath. Indeed it is implicit in some of what he writes, for example: "... creation, and supremely man, rested with God on the Sabbath day ...".¹²⁹ But what is difficult to understand is why, without any explicit scriptural support, he concentrates almost all his attention on man and gives no attention at all to what might be the theological significance of the Sabbath for the rest of creation. It is precisely at this point where it would be possible, indeed internally consistent, for Barth to ponder and explore the unity and interdependence of creation before its Creator, that the thrust of his exposition concerns itself almost solely with man. The partiality of Barth's account is shown in his one sentence "... (here) begins the history of man with God".¹³⁰ It is difficult to understand why Barth is led to such a statement in the light of his previous affirmations that non-human life should not be seen as belonging to man and that it exists in its own way for its own purposes given by God. It must then follow that the non-human experience of the Sabbath is theologically significant. Perhaps it is best expressed in terms of messianic prophecy which "can only reflect what was God's will in creation, that all in whom he has placed his life force should live in shalom, peace and harmony".¹³¹

129. CD, III, 1, p. 211.

130. CD, III, 1, p. 219; my italics.

131. Anthony Phillips, 'Respect for Life in the Old Testament', King's Theological Review, 6, 2 (Autumn 1983) p. 32. Phillips draws attention to "the large number of humanitarian and charitable provisions of Hebrew Law" and especially the "number of enactments concerning animals", e.g. Ex. 23:4 - 5, 10 ; Deut. 22:6 - 7 and 25:4. "While the Old Testament recognises that this is not an ideal world, and makes concessions until the messianic kingdom comes, it remains man's duty to do all in his power to reverence animal life", p. 32.

SUMMARY AND REVIEW: The Relationship between the Human and Non-Human

Standing back to review Barth's treatment of the first creation saga, we need firstly to remember that we are dealing with the "external basis" of the covenant relationship. In this part Barth is seeking to isolate and describe the external order of the divine work. His analysis is concerned to press at every point the theological necessity of each and every part of the divinely ordered cosmos. For Barth does indeed see order and purpose within the created world - a view reached not from scientific experiment or empirical discovery, but from the nature of the designs of the Creator. In the light of this, our opening questions need to be posed again:

(1) How does non-human creation stand in relation to the human?
and

(2) What end and purpose does non-human creation have?

(1) To answer the first question, let us recapitulate those common elements which the human and non-human share in the external work of creation:

- (i) creation as grace;
- (ii) divine blessing;
- (iii) independent life and movement;
- (iv) common habitation and food, and
- (v) co-existence with the Creator.

(i) That creation is grace is obvious and central to Barth's thought; it is also a matter of immense significance. In his Dogmatics in Outline he writes lyrically: "Creation is grace: a statement at which we should like best to pause in reverence, fear and gratitude".

God does not grudge the existence of reality distinct from Himself; He does not grudge its own reality, nature and freedom.¹³²

That creation is grace is an insight which belongs to the response of faith in Jesus Christ. It cannot be deduced from any other source, but that in Jesus we find revealed the relationship between Creator and created, between Father and Son. But it must follow from this, whatever the necessity of positing inner circles of grace, that all existence is grace. No less the firmaments of earth or heaven, the separation of light and darkness (as well as darkness itself), the creeping things on dry land or the fish in the sea or the great lights above - all manifest things in existence are grounded in the free generosity of God. This alone is their sure ontological foundation. We cannot reckon with them except as willed, ordered and guaranteed by the surety of God's love.

(ii) Barth understands blessing as authorisation to be. It is worth noting how similarly both are blessed to multiply, that is, to reproduce, and to fill the earth. In the case of man, there is the further command to exercise Herrschaft, but it is striking how the authorisation to be in both cases follows the same pattern and to the same purpose. Life is given the power to reproduce life and to sustain itself, within the limits of creaturely dependence. This is said not in relation to human needs or wants or in relation to the fullness of creative life somehow construed as

132. Barth, Dogmatics in Outline, ET by G.T. Thomson, 9th ed. (London: SCM Press, 1968) p. 54. Some commentators, George Hendry for example, have located this idea in the thought of Plato. "According to Plato, God is good, and the good is ever generous; it seeks to give, to impart itself to others ... Creation, in a word, is the result of the overflowing goodness of God" (Theology of Nature, op. cit., p. 120) and he goes on to cite Barth as one of the theologians who echo this theory. Such parallels are inevitably misconceived, however. What distinguishes Barth is not the notion of the generosity of God, but the generosity of God uniquely disclosed in Jesus Christ without which we would have no real notion of divine generosity at all.

beneficial or desirous to man. "The truth seems to be", argues Robin Attfield, "that the tradition which holds that in God's eyes the non-human creation has no value except in its instrumental value for mankind has Greek rather than Hebrew sources".¹³³

(iii) Barth relates the gift of blessing to the freedom within the creaturely world to move and act. He recognises that the attitude of blessing, where not rendered explicit, is still implicit by the fact of their being:

We are told of the fecundity, multiplication and expansion of these aquatic and aerial denizens. At the creation of light, the firmament, the earth vegetation and the luminaries, there was no question of any such blessing, nor was it demanded. These things seem to be blessed by being what they are.¹³⁴

But Barth does see the need for explicit blessing for the animal creation since it belongs to the "inner circle" of grace. This is because:

In God's blessing of the fish and birds we really transcend the concept of creation and enter the sphere of God's dealings with His creation.¹³⁵

In other words, prior to the existence of man, God sought a relationship with the non-human which gave them the gift of independent freedom, that is, individual life. This granting of life is seen as an activity of the Spirit in creation, though humankind is touched in a particular and direct

133. Attfield, The Ethics of Environmental Concern, op. cit., p. 26. Cf. John Passmore: "there is a strong Western tradition that man is free to deal with nature as he pleases, since it exists only for his sake. But they (critics of Western civilisation) are incorrect in tracing this attitude back to Genesis. Genesis, and after it the Old Testament generally, certainly tells man that he is, or has the right to be, master of the earth and all it contains. But at the same time it insists that the world was good before man was created, and that it exists to glorify God rather than to serve man", Man's Responsibility for Nature: Ecological Problems and Western Traditions (London: Duckworth, 1974) p. 27.

134. CD, III, 1, pp. 169/70.

135. CD, III, 1, p. 170.

way. Thus as we move from the inanimate to the animate, from the greater degree of dependence to the lesser degree of dependence, we see the increasing and developing closeness of the Creator with his creation. Though all creation is good, some parts of it, in hope and promise at least, are very good. As we move from the creation of vegetable life to that of animals and man (on the same day) so we find, as it were on a continuum, a developing possibility for response, praise and gratitude. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that life seen in this sense of derived, but actual, freedom, is the common possession of all blessed creatures, both animal and human.

(iv) It must follow that the creation of dry land, that is, the earth, is made for the habitation of all that live on it, vegetable, animal and human life. But at this point Barth is over eagerly anthropocentric. He sees the work on the third day as "the erection of a table in the midst of this house which is finally and supremely for man".¹³⁶ A lengthy footnote confirms this exegesis: "It (the earth) belongs parte priori to man. It is inhabited by the human race and appointed for it".¹³⁷ Here Barth appears to abandon his strong Christological emphasis, for while previously he held that incarnate humanity is the centre of the creation, he offers at this point no such Christological qualification. Man as man is seen as the only rightful possessor of the dry land. This position also appears inconsistent with the limited and heavily qualified description of man's dominion offered later. In this later piece, Barth draws back from the claim of man to absolute sovereignty precisely because animals are not to be seen as man's possession, neither do they belong to him.¹³⁸

136. CD, III, 1, p. 144.

137. CD, III, 1, n. p. 150.

138. CD, III, 1, pp. 205/6.

There is one further facet to this question, namely that of common food, as well as habitation. It is odd that Barth should invoke the "table" image in a way that seemingly supports his contention that food is given "supremely and finally for man". Later on he has to wrestle with the opposite direction embedded in the command that both man and animals should eat vegetable life alone. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that in the first saga at least both habitation and food are given for man and animals alike, and that even vegetables have dry land allocated to them.

(v) From the common life envisaged between non-human and human life, and especially that of animals and man, it seems that God intended harmonious co-existence. Barth's discussion of the limits of dominion in this respect makes this quite clear. Materially: (i) animals and man are created on the same day; (ii) both are recipients of special blessings; (iii) both share the same land and same food source; (iv) both join the same praise of God - though animals in a limited way¹³⁹ and (v) both share the hope of a final redemption which will "include peace between man and beast".¹⁴⁰ Barth appears to go further than this. For such is the companionship, even the possibility of sharing something of the divine likeness, that animals have with men that they also share the same burden. "It is not for nothing that it (animal creation) is blessed with the same blessing with which man is also blessed", he writes. "This means that it is also burdened with the same curse man has to carry."¹⁴¹ But given the very closeness presupposed, it must then be asked whether the very bondage that binds them together must not also issue in the same or similar hope of deliverance? The issue is raised by the invoking of the possibility of final redemption and peace among all creatures, but here, strangely

139. See later discussion of this especially pp. 229 - 231.

140. CD, III, 1, p. 211.

141. CD, III, 1, n. p. 181.

enough, it lacks a sufficiently Christological dimension. For if animals are to be seen as part of the inner circle of grace, actually sharing with humanity something of its affliction, must not the inner circle of creation be at one and the same time the inner circle of God's reconciling and redeeming activity? If in the end God has elected man in his companion relation with fellow beings, then should not the reconciling work of Christ include them also? If here we speak of genuinely shared companionship and suffering how can they be left to one side in the work of completion and redemption?

Having identified those common elements which the human and the non-human share in the external work of creation, we need now to look again at those elements which also distinguish them:

- (a) sexual differentiation;
- (b) man's lordship or dominion;
- (c) the Sabbath invitation, and
- (d) the divine likeness.

I shall discuss the first three (a-c) together and (d) separately.

(i) In the case of (a) sexual differentiation and (c) the Sabbath experience, it is simply not clear why Barth lays such weight upon the special place of humankind. Everything at this stage that he wishes to assert about the purpose and value of sexual relations for human beings seems to apply equally to animal life. But Barth presses this point with vigour. "What distinguishes him (man) from the beasts?" he asks. "According to Gen. 1, it is the fact that in the case of man the differentiation of sex is the only differentiation." He continues:

The only real differentiation and relationship is that of man to man, and in its original and most concrete form of man to woman and woman to man.

The argument is vulnerable on three fronts. (1) In the first place, as he recognises, it is not the fact that there exists male and female in man that distinguishes him from animals, but the theological significance which Barth draws from this fact. Barth here moves from the external to the inner basis of the covenant relationship without sufficient care. It simply is not true to claim the fact of sexual differentiation is the "only differentiation" recorded in Genesis 1. Indeed as he recognises the question of divine likeness is primary (see (ii) below). (2) Secondly, the biblical witness in its description of the command to multiply in the lower parts of creation, makes explicit the fact of sexual differentiation in this sphere (1:20ff.). (3) Thirdly, Barth's interpretation of the significance of sexual differentiation in man is weakened by the implication that he is not dealing with interpretation at all. "Men are simply male and female", he writes. Again "Man can and will always be man before God and among his fellows only as he is man in relationship to woman and woman in relationship to man."¹⁴² What substantially (as distinct from formally) Barth wants to claim for man (as distinct from animals) amounts after examination to a restatement of their formal relation, i.e. that man is sexually differentiated. A similar problem of emphasis is present in Barth's discussion of the significance of the Sabbath experience. He cannot deny that animals and other parts of creation are similarly invited to share Sabbath rest and joy, but apart from a bare recognition of this formal relation, he fails to indicate its significance. The problem is compounded by Barth's approach of heavily distinguishing man from the rest of creation on one hand, but failing consequently, on the other, to wrestle with the significance of what distinct non-human experience may signify.

142. CD, III, 1, p. 186.

In the discussion of man's lordship or dominion over animals, Barth moves to what appears to be a more substantial statement of distinction:

What distinguishes him (man) and gives him authority and power is the fact that, although he is not radically different from the other creatures with independent life, he has been honoured by the grace of God to be the image of God in the uniqueness of his plurality as male and female.¹⁴³

(ii) It can hardly be overlooked that it is the conviction that in Christ God becomes substantially one with human creation that determines Barth's method here. Thus the notion of image is related directly and indirectly to what Barth subsequently expounds as the inner basis of the covenant relationship. Man is made of God's image because in this sphere God makes himself real and manifest. As will become fully clear later, the sexual differentiation acquires significance as an expression of the relationship between Christ and his Church and in indicating the complexity of relations within the Godhead itself (see further discussion, pp. 64 - 67).

Is the Non-Human Redundant?

Barth's own assessment of the theological status of creation seen in terms of its Christological centre is in the form of a prefiguring capacity to the covenant that belongs exclusively between God and man. The next section deals extensively with this theme of covenant and I do not want to enter into a full discussion of it now. But what Barth fails to make clear at this stage is how differently significant the place of the non-human must be. It is not clear how the divine determination to make within man a place of self giving limits or qualifies the status of non-human creation. Of course it is possible so to interpret God's activity in Christ but it is nowhere clear in Barth that his anthropocentric concern necessarily follows from his exposition. From this standpoint Barth is

143. CD. III, I, p. 188.

open to the charge that the way in which he interprets the doctrine of creation in terms of its Christological centre fails to give a necessary and full account of creation itself. This is not to take issue with the thrust of his Christological interpretation, but it is to question whether the limits he presupposes as part of his task are essential to it. Whether Barth's thesis can stand examination of the biblical witness as he expounds it subsequently is a matter for later discussion. But at this point it must be questioned whether Barth's affirmation of a Christological centre in creation precludes offering a fuller account of the value and purpose of non-human creation itself. For example: it is not obvious from Barth's analysis of the purpose of man in creation that non-human creation cannot be seen as directly influenced by the work of God as Reconciler as well as Redeemer. It is not self evident that the reconciling work of God in Christ cannot be effective for the entire created order as well as centrally for man. He is right to posit an inner circle of divine grace within which the actuality of God's self-giving is realised and manifest, but it does not follow that this self-giving is limited in its effects or influence to human creation alone. Thus Barth in his account of the external covenant relationship emphasises (rightly) the fundamental distinction between animals and man, but in a way that fails to take account of the many common theological elements previously enumerated. This is particularly striking in the relationship between animals and man. On Barth's own evidence there is solid ground for accepting a companion relationship between them even to the extent of affirming that animals are participators to some degree in the covenant relationship. But that accepted, it requires theological articulation, that is, its significance needs to be drawn out precisely and in relation to his major presuppositions.

Does Barth avoid the charge then that creation, and non-human creation in particular, is seen as incidental to the divine purpose in creation? This

question may perhaps be best answered in the form of another question: Why is it that God should create a world in which exist forms and kinds of life, blessed and sustained by his power, which are substantially excluded from the further act of reconciliation which he affects through his costly self-revelation? We shall wrestle with this question in the light of Barth's further exposition of the covenant relationship.

CHAPTER TWO: AN EXCLUSIVE COVENANT: THE REDUNDANCY OF THE NON-HUMAN

'The Covenant as the Internal Basis of Creation' is the title of the third sub-section of the second major section of Part One. Here Barth gives his exposition of the second creation saga. There is no "material contradiction" between these two accounts.¹ The second is neither "a supplement to nor a commentary on" the first.² Of course it may be said that the second is a different Schöpfungsgeschichte but the theme remains the same. They have a theological harmony because the concern of both is identical, namely creation and covenant, but viewed from different angles.

An Outline of the Second Saga

Barth begins by outlining his main points. Creation is the making of beings who neither possess nor assume within themselves meaning except in so far as this is given to them. The central point is that creation does not only exist, it "exists meaningfully". It is only from the free love of God that creation acquires meaning and it exists solely to receive this gift. Secondly, creation because it cannot stand by itself is "one long preparation" for the intentions of God, namely the history of the covenant. "Its nature", writes Barth, "is simply its equipment for grace".³ Thirdly, the second creation saga has as its concern the internal basis of the covenant and while this covenant can be said to be the "goal" of creation history, it also belongs to the very beginning of its existence. From this standpoint, his main interest is "not how creation promises, proclaims and prophesies the covenant, but how it pre-figures and to that extent anticipates it without being identical with it." Again Barth's Christological motif emerges clearly. For in this saga we see how creation is to be a sign "not (of) Jesus Christ as the goal but Jesus Christ as the beginning (the beginning just because He is the goal) of creation".

1. CD, III, 1, p. 228.

2. CD, III, 1, pp. 229/30.

3. CD, III, 1, p. 231.

Because the second narrative begins with the goal already established (as will be seen shortly) we are essentially dealing with the history of creation "from the inside".⁴ It is in the creation of the first man (and not in the episode of the Fall) that the whole history that follows is prefigured. Barth now explains why this is the case as he turns to his exposition of the second narrative.

(i) The Christological Presupposition

We learn from the beginning of the second account (Gen. 2:4b - 7) that God reveals his name (Yahweh Elohim). He is the one who "under this name" has determined and chosen Israel and to whom he reveals himself. Moreover it is this God who makes the "earth and the heavens". This inversion of the order found in the first narrative indicates the centrality of the earth in this account. For man is to be the being who tills and serves the created order. Far from being "anthropocentric" this saga places upon man the concrete duty to look after what God has made as is later emphasised in the account of the Garden of Eden. Unlike the first account, where vegetable life serves man, he is now seen as the "being which had to be created for the sake of the earth" (Gen. 2:6). In what sense then is he to be distinguished from the other animals? Only in that God breathes into his nostrils and he becomes thus a living soul. Only to man does God give life in this manner. Not by virtue of his gifts or abilities or even his immediacy to God. Precisely because of his nature and commission, man's existence stands in contradiction to the "earthiness of the earth".⁵ Man fulfils the meaning of his existence by holding a dual responsibility before God and creation for his tilling and keeping of the earth.

Barth probes the meaning and explanation of the origin of man thus given. Behind these "prefigurative pictures" stands "the whole of Old Testament anthropology".⁶ It is conceivable that this first man divinely commissioned

4. CD, III, 1, p. 232.

5. CD, III, 1, p. 237.

6. CD, III, 1, p. 238.

and called to service represents not just individual man, or man in general, but Israel as the people of God. This explanation may not be wholly satisfactory, however. There is a new and decisive interpretation. The explanation of this "hard but also hopeful eschatological riddle" is to be found in the "fulfilment in Jesus as the Messiah of Israel". The similarities once grasped are unmistakable. For Jesus is also the man of special commission whose humility and service are to be the fulfilment and goal of all Israel's hopes. "He, Jesus Christ", writes Barth, "is the man whose existence was necessary for the perfecting of the earth". Thus Jesus is the answer to the riddle of which the saga writers speak "objectively if not subjectively". No interpretation other than this can be the "final" one.⁷

(ii) The Garden of Glory

Barth now turns to the central story of this second saga (Gen. 2:8 - 17), namely the creation of the Garden of Eden and the divine command and prohibition concerning it. Unlike the first creation saga, interest is now focussed on one particular place. There is no further reference to the creation of heaven and earth. "But what kind of place is it?" asks Barth. We must not be misled, he argues, into thinking of a classical paradise. Whilst in the Greek translation "Eden" means "paradise", the garden is "not described as an Elysium, an island of the blessed, a garden of Hesperides, or even a Lubberland".⁸ What makes the garden special is simply that God planted it and that it is especially pleasing to him. Barth further asks: "Where is this place?". Whilst any precise "geographical localisation" is quite beyond what the saga writers intended, he insists that the biblical witness is here speaking of a "definite place on earth". Although such a place would clearly be inaccessible to human beings, and whilst mention of the place is only "semi-concrete", this saga is aiming

7. CD, III, 1, p. 239.

8. CD, III, 1, p. 250.

to relate real history. Barth is a trifle ambivalent, however, as may be gleaned from the following sentence: "It is palpable that in these passages we have to do with a genuine consideration of real events, persons and things, but only with a consideration and therefore not with a historical review but with constructions which do not have their origin in observation but in imagination".⁹ In short, they belong to "pre-historical history" as Barth so defined in the first creation saga.

Attention is now directed to a number of individual features in the garden. Firstly, the garden is God's sanctuary by virtue of the fact that he possesses it and is Lord over it. Secondly, what determines and characterises this place is the divine beneficence operating in man's favour. Man is a cherished creature. Thirdly, fertility and all possibility of life have their origin here in Eden and particularly in the one river which flows from it. Fourthly, the garden itself is the place of Herrlichkeit. For all that God will do outside this sanctuary "goes back to the promise and revelation and gift" which he realised within it. But the most important feature is the centre of the garden, a "Holiest of Holies". This comprises the two trees, the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The first tree appears to be obsolete and of no use to man. But "with its fruits" it "is the divinely given sign of what he (man) has to do with the earth".¹⁰ The tree thus represents man's rest and security within God's sanctuary. And man leaves this first tree untouched. The second tree is not a sign of an existent reality but the "sign of a possibility presented to man by God".¹¹ The essence of this tree is knowledge of good and evil. God does not will that the possibility represented by this tree should be realised. The determining feature of the Creator is his ability to make distinctions between right and wrong, good and evil,

9. CD, III, 1, p. 252.

10. CD, III, 1, p. 256.

11. CD, III, 1, p. 257.

and man could not possibly usurp God's position without incurring his wrath. Barth relates the consequences of man's decision to the judicial office of God in creation. God commands obedience as he alone can know what is good for man. In seeking "a responsibility which exceeds his capacity" man will "have to share with God" nothing less than "the whole responsibility" of God's "judicial office, knowledge and sentence".¹²

In the light of this an obvious question arises. Could not God's grace have prevented the free choice of man? Could it be that the divine prohibition actually served to strengthen the temptation? Certainly man has freedom at this point, but this is not "a freedom of choice between obedience and disobedience".¹³ God has not put before man the possibility of usurpation of his sovereignty but only the possibility of "a free decision". Thus the notion of temptation is inappropriate. God gives man "freedom to obey" to live a life with him in love. But neither obedience nor disobedience are "physically necessary" nor "impossible".¹⁴

Barth steps back to recall and amplify his line of exposition. "It can hardly fail to be noticed", he writes, "that the whole actuality of Israel in Canaan" is being "here projected backward, or better still, is here perceived and revealed as the meaning of creation".¹⁵ The holy land of Eden is a prototype of Israel itself. Abraham, for example, the Patriarch of the Jewish nation, was himself called to a new land assigned by God in a similar way to the first man who is called to live in his home (the Garden of Eden). But the "decisive parallel" consists in the comparison between the trees which occupy the centre of the Garden of Eden and the

12. CD, III, 1, p. 261.

13. CD. III. 1. p. 263.

14. CD, III, 1, p. 266.

15. CD, III, 1, p. 268.

Law of God which formed the centre of Israel's life.¹⁶ Thus the Law of God revealed to Israel has its prototype in the Tree of Life in the Garden of Paradise. Both are signs of the fact that Israel and man must hold fast to their election and to the sovereignty of God. Everything depends upon this decision. Barth sees "idolatry" as the clearest example of the knowledge of good and evil. Moreover, the reason why Israel must "suffer and vanish" when it refuses to acknowledge the sovereignty of God in the similar way that the first man must suffer and vanish when he does likewise is simply that "at this moment it is involved in inevitable failure".¹⁷ The whole political and spiritual status of Israel is threatened when it will not recognise that Yahweh is alone "the righteousness of this people".¹⁸ To the question, therefore, why is God's grace insufficiently strong to prevent misdeeds there is only the answer in both cases that God would not be taking the other seriously if this were so. Since God wills the free response of his creatures and this in fellowship, the possibility of good and evil as represented by the tree in the garden must always be present. Barth concludes that "the grace of God is so profound that it condescends to call and receive man as his free covenant-partner".¹⁹

Before completing this section, Barth is keen to raise and relate what he sees as the objective "Christological meaning" (christologischen Sinn) of this episode. For the Jewish reading of creation history, namely of a covenant established and then lost, of grace found and then disposed, and of promises made only to remain unfulfilled, is a woefully inadequate, indeed tragically inauspicious, rendering of creation history. Only if creation history has its goal in the person of Jesus Christ can God's

16. CD, III, 1, p. 269.

17. CD, III, 1, p. 271.

18. CD, III, 1, p. 272.

19. CD, III, 1, p. 273.

faithfulness be vindicated. Without this goal creation is left with a "grandiose illusion".²⁰ In the life and person of Jesus, God actualises the covenant to which the Old Testament bears witness. This is "the Christian reading" of the Paradise saga.²¹

(iii) Sexual Difference as Human Co-partnership

Barth now turns to the "climax and conclusion" of this second saga (Gen. 18 - 25), namely the creation of woman. God does not wish to create solitary man, but man as a duality of male and female. Barth makes great play of this inherent two-foldness of humankind, for it is a sign of unity-in-difference, or complex unity, which in turn is a sign of being made in the image of the triune God. To be a partner with God in the history of the covenant, man himself required a partner. But in order to grasp the meaning of this final section, we need to consider the significance of the final cry of man when God brings the woman to him. The exclamation "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (v 23) is the "goal" of the saga because man is seen as appropriating and accepting for himself - as a free decision - God's own gift. The animals are also created and brought to him but they are insufficient for his needs. Man, it is true, names the animals and thereby expresses his lordship over them and only "in their relationship to him" are they "what they are".²² But the creation of animal life is only a prefiguring of the vital decision man must make about the creation of woman. The making of animals was not "a divine experiment which failed" but a necessary preparation of what was to come. Man must be able to choose between possibilities in order to make his choice his own. "He chooses the fact that he is elected", summarises Barth.²³

Particular elements of the story are now examined. Why, in the first

20. CD, III, 1, p. 275.

21. CD, III, 1, p. 276.

22. CD, III, 1, p. 292.

23. CD, III, 1, p. 293.

place, should the saga want to describe a deep sleep falling upon man during the creation of woman? (v 21) Barth answers that we have here to deal with God's wholly sovereign act of creation. While man is called upon to affirm God's work, there can be no element of creaturely participation or indeed observation. It remains first and last God's own work. Because of this, the story of the creation of woman must of its nature be story, that is, saga. Nevertheless, we can know four things concerning the how of the creation of woman. The first is that woman is truly of man. When the saga speaks of the rib taken from man and from which God formed the female, it posits the closest possible relationship between the two. Man relates to woman as he does to his own flesh. The second is that as woman is a constitutive part of his being, man cannot separate himself from her. The third is that man has truly given of himself in the creation of woman. "He experienced a loss", as Barth indicates. An injury that could have resulted in death but was in fact subsequently healed. The fourth point, and the most decisive, is that man recognises in woman "something of himself" but that with "its own autonomous nature and structure".²⁴ In the relationship between male and female, in their unity, yet separateness; in their closeness yet distinctive individuality, Barth sees nothing of "chance or human arbitrariness" - a point that figures prominently in later analysis.²⁵

Thus the cry of man when God brings the woman to him: "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman because she was taken out of man", (Gen. 2:23) is more than simply the giving of a name or a factual assertion. It concerns the ordering of man and his relationship with himself in dual form. But who is this woman? Who is "this"? Barth offers the simplest and most comprehensive definition

24. CD, III, 1, p. 296.

25. CD, III, 1, p. 298.

of what woman is as "the being to which man, himself becoming male; can and must say in the exercise of his freedom that this is now the helpmeet which otherwise he had sought in vain but which now had been fashioned and brought by God".²⁶ Those who do not know this, adds Barth, really do not know woman at all. They are "merely giving rein to theory and fancy". The meaning of the Hebrew 'isha, whilst difficult to grasp in its entirety, is essentially this: "woman is of man". She belongs to him. This relationship is not a question of "value, dignity and honour but of order".²⁷ Woman has a special place but that is inextricably bound up with the position of man and the fact that she is chosen by him.

(iv) Human partnership past-figures divine election

The second narrative concludes with two further observations. The first begins: "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh" (v 24). Barth is much exercised by the preposition "therefore". What can it signify in this context? He suggests two possibilities. The first is that the monogamous relationship of man to woman in society follows from what has been described so far, and the second that this relationship is grounded in revelation. Barth sees in this verse an elaboration of the whole notion of man's pre-eminence previously explored, for only in love and marriage is this pre-eminence grounded. Indeed man's supremacy over woman consists in "his subordination to this arrangement".²⁸ Either view must see the historical reality of love and marriage as having its basis in the nature of creation. The second concluding passage begins: "And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed" (v 25). The nakedness described here is a sign of holy shamelessness and innocence. They had nothing to hide. Masculinity or femininity are not weaknesses to be concealed.

26. CD, III, 1, pp. 300/1.

27. CD, III, 1, p. 301.

28. CD, III, 1, p. 306.

Barth now seeks to establish more clearly the overriding significance of these final emphases of the second creation saga. We find ourselves before "the mystery" of the covenant of grace in that it reflects the inner basis of creation itself.²⁹ But in what sense? In the first place, love and marriage between man and woman, particularly as exemplified in the Song of Songs and the later prophetic tradition, is a "pàrable and sign" of the relationship between Yahweh and his people.³⁰ Yahweh can be properly described as the "Lover, Bridegroom and Husband" and Israel as his partner. Their relationship is the "prototype" of human love and marriage. Barth, however, is not satisfied that the analogy should rest there. In the second place, there is a striking Christological dimension in two further respects. On one hand, there is the link between human sexuality and the "procreation of the Holy seed".³¹ Human hopes and messianic expectation here converge. Does not human sexuality look forward beyond itself "to the future Son"?³¹ On the other, pushing ahead of the Song of Songs and the prophets, we are forced to see the correspondence between Yahweh and Israel and the greater mystery of Christ and his Church. It is precisely because Jesus Christ is himself the basis of Israel's call that it is appropriate to describe the relationship between Yahweh and Israel in "erotic" terms. There is indeed here an analogy of love pointing forwards and backwards to the nature of the inner basis of creation. From this standpoint we affirm that Jesus Christ and his Church "are the internal basis of creation".³³

The Anthropocentric Meaning of the Covenant

Before we examine various aspects of Barth's exposition, we need first to explore the pivotal presupposition that vastly influences his treatment

29. CD, III, 1, p. 312.

30. CD, III, 1, p. 315.

31. CD, III, 1, p. 312.

32. CD, III, 1, p. 320.

33. CD, III, 1, p. 322.

of the combined section: 'Creation and Covenant'. Barth states this pre-supposition clearly in his summary: "... according to this (biblical) witness the purpose and therefore the meaning of creation is to make possible the history of God's covenant with man which has its beginning, its centre and its culmination in Jesus Christ".³⁴ Sympathetic commentators agree that this is "the way" to approach the doctrine of creation. He is "right and illuminating", argues Alec Whitehouse, "in finding the relation of creation and covenant to be the key to the whole mystery of what God the Creator has done".³⁵ Again and again throughout the three parts of this major section, Barth affirms, re-affirms, refines, restates and constantly illuminates this fundamental insight. "The decisive anchorage of the recognition that creation and covenant belong to each other", he writes, "is the recognition that God the Creator is the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit".³⁶ "Nowhere, to the best of my belief", writes Whitehouse, "have the eyes of modern men been opened to the meaning of God's work in creation, as in these pages".³⁷

The Ambiguous Status of the Non-Human

From our perspective, however, there is a major and unresolved question: who are the partners in this covenant relationship? The whole of creation? The wide circle of animate beings blessed with the power of independent movement? The inner circle of those beings (including man) created on the sixth day and which together are given food and habitation and blessing? Or is man the sole covenant partner? The assumption throughout is that man alone is called to be God's partner in this way. The fullest statement on this can be found in Part Two. In context Barth is offering exegesis of Genesis 2:7 concerning the breathing of life into man:

34. CD, III, 1, p. 42.

35. Whitehouse, 'Karl Barth and the Doctrine of Creation' in The Authority of Grace: Essays in Response to Karl Barth, ed. by Ann Loades (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1981) p. 11.

36. CD, III, 1, p. 48.

37. Whitehouse, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

When God breathes His breath into the nostrils of man and thus makes him a living being, He seems to be doing materially the same thing as might be said of the animals. It is merely a matter of form that it is said specifically of man. The material difference emerges only in the fact that the continuation of the story is the history of the covenant and salvation, not between God and animals, but between God and man. The course of events described in Genesis 3ff. occurs between God and man, and not between God and the animals. This shows what is involved in the fact that God gave man the Spirit. He gave the Spirit to animals also, but obviously not in the same way. Man is the being between whom and God such events can take place ... Thus man's soul per se has an affinity to the Spirit by whom it is made. And thus it is created a priori in this affinity, i.e., for the realisation of a connexion between man and his Creator. This is the factual explanation of these very striking linguistic usages of the Bible. In regard to animals, they would both be inexplicable, because a retrospective consideration of animals, looking from salvation history back to their nature, is impossible for us. In regard to man, both are readily explicable, since we not only can but must understand human nature from the standpoint of salvation history.³⁸

We shall consider at a later point the question of the spiritual nature of animals (see especially pp. 252-270). What is striking in this passage is Barth's denial that "the course of events described in Genesis 3ff. occurs between God and man, not between God and the animals". Does the biblical material support his view? Of course it cannot be held that animals are major partners to the covenant, or that they figure prominently throughout the whole of Genesis. But do the events from Genesis 3ff. support

38. Barth, Church Dogmatics, III, 2, The Doctrine of Creation, Part Two ('The Creature') eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance, ET by H. Knight, G.W. Bromiley, J.K.S. Reid and R.H. Fuller (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1960) n. p. 396; my italics. There are surely echoes of Calvin here. "Although the favour which the Lord promises extends also to animals, yet it is not in vain that he addresses himself only to men, who, by the sense of faith, are able to perceive this benefit ... (God) declares that he will be propitious also to brute animals, so that the effect of the covenant towards them, might be the preservation of their lives only, without imparting to them sense and intelligence", Commentaries on the First Book of Moses called Genesis, ET by John King (Edinburgh: The Calvin Translation Society, 1847) vol. I (1847) p. 297; my italics. A view, ironically perhaps, which is consistently found in Catholic textbooks, e.g. "Things lower than man, it is true, come to be, develop and pass away, but they lack mind, that force which forms history in the real sense", Eberhard Welty, A Handbook of Christian Social Ethics, ET by Gregor Kirstein (Freiburg: Herder and Edinburgh/London: Nelson, 1960) vol. I (1960) p. 41.

the interpretation that animals do not form part of the covenant relationship or play a part in Heilsgeschichte? Apparently not. Barth appears to have overlooked the saga of Noah. For the violence and carnivorousness of mankind precipitated God's anger upon mankind and also expressly the beasts around him (Gen. 6:7 and 13). The building of the Ark symbolised God's mercy not only towards Noah and his wife and children but also towards each pair of living beings (vv. 18 and 19). Moreover, after the Flood an everlasting covenant is enjoined not only with Noah and his descendants, but also "with every living creature that is with you" (Gen. 9:10; 12; 16; 17). How then is it possible to deny that animals form part of the everlasting covenant relationship? Interpreting Barth here is not straightforward. In earlier passages the anthropocentric character of his understanding appears resolute: "What is meant is the history of the covenant of grace instituted by God between Himself and man".³⁹ Later on Barth refers in a concise and illuminating discussion of the status of animals to the fact that they too are remembered by God and included within the covenant relationship.⁴⁰ But the implications of this recognition are not pursued. In his main discussion of the creation of animals, he writes: "Man's salvation and perdition, his joy and sorrow, will be reflected in the weal and woe of this animal environment and company". And he continues: "Not as an independent partner of the covenant, but as an attendant, the animal will participate with man (the independent partner) in the covenant, sharing both the promise and the curse which shadows the promise".⁴¹ How adequate then is Barth's treatment of the place of animals in the covenant relationship? It should be remembered that animals are not entirely overlooked in Barth's discussion. In his concise three page discussion of the status of animals Barth brings to light many

39. CD, III, 1, p. 59; my italics.

40. CD, III, 1, n. p. 180.

41. CD, III, 1, p. 178.

positive features concerning their role and significance. Animals are linked with man throughout the Old and New Testaments. The beasts give honour to God (Is. 43:20); a righteous man will look after them (Prov. 12:10) and even the cattle of Nineveh are of account to the Lord (Jon. 4:11). Moreover, Barth stresses the theological bond that unites man and animals. For both share not only God's blessing but also his curse. Thus animals are expressly included in the divine judgement on Israel for they shall "languish" with man (Hos. 4:3); God's anger shall be poured out upon them also (Jer. 7:20); birds and beasts shall be destroyed because of man's wickedness (Jer. 12:4); and all shall "shake" before the presence of the Lord (Ezek. 38:20). Sharing the same blessing and curse means that animals share "in the confusion of his (man's) existence and his (man's) world". Barth goes further to include the possibility of redemption for animals too. "But (in its own way) it will also be freed from the bondage of φθορά into the glorious liberty of the sons of God". Thus Romans 8 and Psalm 36:6 are taken as "a thread" running through "the whole of the Bible" and affirming that animals share in the inner circle of God's redeeming work.⁴²

In the light of these very positive affirmations of the place of animals it is very difficult to understand Barth's ambivalence about animals forming part of the covenant relationship. It is possible that Barth's lack of a full and precise treatment of this area may have led to ad hoc judgements. In the light of his often promisingly positive statements we could only wish that he had taken more time to develop a more comprehensive position. There is so much more we could have learnt if only these questions had received more of his attention.

But perhaps the most important question that can be raised concerns the

42. CD, III, 1, n. pp. 179 - 181.

adequacy of Barth's handling and interpretation of the biblical material.⁴³

It will be remembered that he speaks in his sectional summary of how "this witness", that is the biblical witness, understands the meaning of creation in terms of "the history of God's covenant with man". In relation to animals he interprets this witness in one of two major ways:

- (i) animals are not independent (selbständig) but only attendant partners to man in the covenant, or
- (ii) animals have no place in the Heilsgeschichte, that is "the history of the covenant and salvation".

To the first (i) it is difficult to know what Barth means by this notion of attending. It cannot be claimed, of course, that animals are the major covenant partners. He is surely right in supposing that they stand at some distance within the covenant relationship itself. They are "fore-runners", "companions", brute "witnesses" and "precursor(s) of man".⁴⁴ But where Barth fails to account for the biblical material is in his implication that animals are not actually part of the covenant at all. Their role and significance may be as Barth describes as prefiguring and precursing that of man, but they can only do so as they stand alongside man within the covenant relationship. This can be shown by two examples from the Noah saga. In the first place, and apparently trivially, it is the bird that seeks the dry land for the community within the Ark (Gen. 8:7 ff.). It is that community, saved from threat, including within it

43. It is not just that Barth overlooks one text, he does not grapple sufficiently with the consistent intimations that animals have a covenant relationship with God, e.g. "I will make a covenant on behalf of Israel with the wild beasts, the birds of the air, and the things that creep upon the earth, and I will break bow and sword and weapon of war and sweep them off the earth, so that all living creatures may lie down without fear", Hosea 2:18; NEB; my italics. Freedom from fear, that is, of violence between species which is a serious aspect of covenant relationships almost entirely overlooked by commentators (see also esp. Joel 2:21 - 23 and Ezek. 34:24).

44. CD, III, 1, p. 178.

all species and kinds of life that God wishes to maintain and for which food is provided (Gen. 6:21). Secondly, and more importantly, it is animal kind which constitutes the offering to God after the Flood and which in consequence issues in God's declaration of everlasting resolution (Gen. 8:20f.). In the light of our previous discussion of sacrifice, we can see that it is precisely at this point that animals are more than attenders of the covenant relationship. It is actually the offering of animal life which constitutes regeneration and atonement. Barth understands this offering of animals as a prefiguring of "the indispensable but saving offering of the Son of Man as the proper content of the permission and promise given to him". But he fails to draw from this the obvious corollary that animals then are actual, as well as prefigurative, signs of God's saving purposes. He speaks rightly of the "lowest humiliation" of animals in this regard⁴⁵ but fails to grasp that as with the Son of Man, so with animals, humiliation is turned into freedom and victory. The significance of animals could be said to be that within the covenant relation; they prefigure and actualise to man God's saving intent. The same point needs to be remembered in the context of the "new regulation" as Barth calls it, that sanctions the taking of animal life for food. He interprets this new freedom on man's part as an indication of how animals may be seen as serving his covenant relationship with God.⁴⁶ But in fact their offering (which is the greater) can be seen as signifying how fundamental and indispensable they are to the continuation of the covenant relationship with both man and animals. Moreover, the new regulation is not without limits. While God allows the taking of clean (that is non-carnivorous) kinds of animals for food and sacrifice, this freedom involves two responsibilities. The first, that no blood should be taken, that is the life (nephesh) of the animal belongs to God and may not be appropriated for

45. CD, III, 1, p. 187.

46. CD, III, 1, see pp.409f.

man's purposes (Gen. 9:4). Secondly, man will be held to account for the life of animals taken except in obedience to God's command (Gen. 9:5). Such a picture, far from suggesting that animals are incidental to the covenant relationship, presupposes that the relationship enfolds and includes a symbiotic relationship with them. It is a mistake to understand man's prerogatives over animals as signs of their inferiority. It is precisely because God wills animals to be the instruments of his saving purpose (which incidentally involves their death) that makes them significantly important within the covenant relationship. Barth's Christological emphasis rightly relates the sacrifice of animals to the supreme sacrifice of the Son of Man. But this actually involves placing the sacrifice of animals on a higher and more significant level than he appreciates. The humility of animals and their openness to God's will, understood theologically in terms of the humility and sacrifice of Christ, point unmistakably to their decisive and affective contribution within the covenant relationship. In Part Two, Barth writes of the work of Christ:

He finds it worth His while to live and work for His fellows and their salvation. He does not hold aloof from them. ... He gives Himself freely to them. He has only one goal: to maintain the cause of these men in death and the conquest of death; to offer up His life for them that they may live and be happy.⁴⁷

Such a Christological framework once grasped means that we must see the sacrifice of the lowest as having the highest significance.⁴⁸

To the second (ii) position that animals have no place in the Heilsgeschichte

47. CD, III, 2, p. 215.

48. Cf. J.L. Houlden: "New Testament writers enjoin the following of certain lines of conduct or the acquiring of certain qualities, not on the grounds of their intrinsic worth or rightness, but on the grounds that they are characteristics of God or of Jesus and are therefore to be imitated as part of a life of discipleship". Among these pre-eminently are generosity (II Cor. 8:9) and humility (Philip. 2. 3 - 11), Ethics and the New Testament (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973) p. 13.

we can see in context that Barth is concerned to stress the special nature of the reception of the Spirit by man. Man has a special status, he argues, not in the form in which it appears in the biblical material, but in the fact that the "continuation of the story is the history of the covenant ... between God and man".

Of course Barth can and does argue that man's spiritual status can be shown in how and to what degree he is capable of living the covenant relationship in its fullness. He could also point to the ways in which man's decisions for good or ill move the course of salvation history to new and decisive peaks of divine love and judgement. He would surely be right in at least claiming for man a major share of the covenant partnership. But Barth is at his very weakest in claiming that animals do not figure in any part of the history of salvation as recorded from Genesis 3ff. Indeed from what we have already described, he needs to postulate in animals such a gift of the Spirit that enables them to prefigure and actualise God's redeeming purposes. This is not to deny that Barth may be right in suggesting some special gift of the Spirit in man but what is questionable, however, is the use of the biblical material to suggest why this may be. Barth concludes his discussion by arguing that:

In relation to animals, they would both be inexplicable (that is, that there is an affinity between the Spirit and man, and that it can be so realised as he claims) because a retrospective consideration of animals, looking from salvation history back to their nature, is impossible for us.⁴⁹

But why from the standpoint of the Heilsgeschichte is it so impossible? It cannot fail to be noticed that Barth is claiming support for a presumption of difference at the very point where the biblical material is arguably ambivalent, if not in opposition. What is it that constitutes the

49. CD, III, 2, n. p. 396; my italics.

nature of an animal that precludes it becoming a "covenant partner"

(Bundesgenosse)? If we look again at those elements of the first creation saga which animals share with humans, namely

- (i) creation as grace;
- (ii) divine blessing;
- (iii) independent life and movement;
- (iv) common habitation and food, and
- (v) co-existence with the Creator;

it is difficult to see a basis upon which Barth could claim such a distinction. Again if we look at those elements of the first creation saga which differentiate animals from man, namely:

- (a) sexual differentiation
- (b) man's lordship or dominion
- (c) the Sabbath invitation, and
- (d) the divine likeness

we need to inquire in which of these faculties or relationships such a special gift of the Spirit could be said to cohere. But from our previous exploration, Barth's major area of located difference lies not in the giving of dominion (only a consequence of being made in God's image), or in the granting of the divine image, but in sexual differentiation, thus:

The only real differentiation and relationship is that of man to man, and in its original and most concrete form of man to woman and woman to man.⁵⁰

We need here to interpret Barth with care. It will be seen that sexual differentiation for all its apparent straightforwardness has special significance in prefiguring the inner unity of God himself. It is conceivable that man's being made in the image of God so draws him to a unity with the Second Person of the Godhead that a special gift of the Spirit

50. CD, III, 1, p. 186; my italics.

must be supposed. It is also conceivable that some special gift of the Spirit may be said to accompany the special responsibility given by God to man in his exercise of God-like power over creation. But whatever the possible or real justifications for human difference, Barth does not invoke them. But, and this is the central point, even if such a justification for man's affinity with the Spirit were advanced, it is very difficult to see on what basis we could claim no spiritual capacity for animals to participate to a greater or lesser degree in the history of the covenant of salvation. Barth may have good reasons for positing the special relationship between man and the Spirit but in this area at least he fails to supply the necessary biblical support required to defend it.⁵¹ Moreover, it is, from the standpoint of the sagas, unevidenced to suggest there is something in the nature of animals so described that precludes their participation in covenant history. The choice of covenant relations is a question which is settled by God's choice and decree and about which, as Barth often says, man may entertain pious or not so pious thoughts, but which are incidental to the reality of divine election. The clearest and most satisfactory rendering of Genesis 9 is that God has elected an eternal covenanted fellowship with man, his descendants and "with every living thing that is with you" (v. 10).

The Symbiotic Dimension of the Covenant

But is it significant that animals form part of the covenant relationship and therefore participate in the Heilsgeschichte? Could Barth after all be right that in practice the inclusion of animals within the covenant relationship is interesting but largely inconsequential? How and why does it matter that man is convicted by God of his covenant relationship together with and inseparable from other living beings? Or, as Whitehouse poignantly questions: "If, aided by Barth, we penetrate to the secret of why things are, and find that secret in the fact of Christ and His Church,

51. See, however, the discussion pp. 251 - 256.

dare we suppose that the whole existence and worth of flowers, beasts, sunsets, and storms, has been exhausted by such understanding?" Or again: "Is there not something to learn about life from created things, seen as for the most part we are bound to see them, out of relation to the Gospel?"⁵²

The first point of significance for us in this saga concerns the setting and place of man in creation (Gen. 2:4 - 7); " ... this saga is not as anthropocentric as it is often made out to be." Why is this? Because man is described as the one who tills the earth, indeed divinely appointed so to do. Man is "the being who had to be created for the sake of the earth and to serve it". In discussion Barth makes three further points:

- (i) Here, too, creation is really the creation of the heavens and earth (with an emphasis on the terrestrial sphere), and not just that of man; indeed it is the creation of the man who must work and serve under the heavens and on earth, i.e., in relation to his fellow creatures ... For in this account it (vegetable life) is a kind of end in itself (hier hat sie zunächst so etwas wie einen Selbstzweck).⁵³

Vegetation exists prior to the creation of man and appears to have its own Selbstzweck.⁵⁴ Thus the life of other beings may have significance in themselves as made by God, that is, even without the existence of man. Perhaps we may say that their significance is to be as God would have them be.

- ii) But to make that which has been planted thrive, God needs the farmer or gardener. This will be the role of man. He thus appears as the being which must be able and ready to serve in order to give meaning and purpose to the planting of the earth.

The purpose of man is not seen as it were outside his relations with the

52. Whitehouse, op. cit., p. 15. But are created things "out of relation to — the Gospel"? See pp. 163 - 177 for my discussion of Christology.

53. CD, III, 1, p. 235; my italics.

54. "Self-purpose" is an alternative rendering of Selbstzweck (p. 235) Die Kirchliche Dogmatik, III, I, p. 266. Thus the sentence could also read "it (the vegetable kingdom) has a purpose of its own".

natural world but towards and through them. The first purpose of man is that of serving the earth. The significance of this will only become apparent in the light of how Barth subsequently expounds the theological goal of this saga. It is important to remember that man stands in relation to the earth in the same way that God stands in relation to man. This point, from a different perspective, is also made in the first saga. The notion of dominion, which Barth rightly describes as lordship, means that man shares in the creative responsibility of God: he gives "meaning and purpose" to creation because he is, in this sense, inseparable from it.

- (iii) In view of this complete integration into the totality of the created world, there can be no question of a superiority of man supported by appeals to his special dignity, or of forgetfulness not merely of a general but of the very definite control of Yahweh Elohim over man. In spite of all the particular things that God may plan and do with him, in the first instance man can only serve the earth (der Erde dienen) and will continually have to do so.⁵⁵

Once again a convincing creation centred view of man. This seems to imply a covenant relationship in the sense that man is called by God to perform work within creation and to be integral to it. A more striking illustration of man's closeness and interdependence with the non-human would be difficult to find. There is to exist on both sides a radical interdependence meaning that both may serve (dienen) and support the life of the other. Plants in their giving of food, and man in his tilling of the soil constitute a symbiotic relationship. Man stands in this relationship as the definitive partner - not in the sense of holding within himself the totality of theological purpose, but in the sense of having power and responsibility, that is, responsibility because he has the God-like exercise of power. John Austin Baker speaks of this interdependence as a sign of creation's openness to God's purposes: "The world is not a closed system", he writes, whilst "man is utterly dependent on the world", it is equally

55. CD, III, 1, p. 235; my italics.

true that "nature also needs man". "It is dependent upon him to realise the potential of good present in the natural order; and this means that men have been given their power to dominate the world not simply, or even primarily, that they may enjoy it, but as a responsibility to care for it, and to enable it to fulfil its proper destiny".⁵⁶

The Christological Basis of Man's Stewardship

We now turn to Barth's treatment of man. He is made "of the dust of the earth". A fact that points to his "humility" within creation.⁵⁷ "That God made him and that he made him of the earth are both things which he has in common with the beast", he writes.⁵⁸ But Barth does treat further this remarkable occurrence. He does not see in it "a concord of the whole creation with itself" or how "by a provision of the supreme Mind there is an intermixture of the intellectual with the sensible world, in order", writes Gregory of Nyssa, "that nothing in creation may be thrown aside as worthless ... or left without its portion of the Divine fellowship". In this way St. Gregory sees the forming of man from the dust of the ground as a divine "inspiration" enabling all things earthly to be "raised up to the Divine, and so one certain grace of equal value might pervade the whole creation".⁵⁹ What then is the difference between man and animals? Formally only in the fact that he is made a human body. But, crucially,

56. Baker, 'Man: His Nature, Predicament and Hope', in Man: Fallen and Free, ed. by E.W. Kemp (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1969) p. 98.

57. Cf. Thorliff Boman: "there can be no doubt about the fact that man's littleness is (t)hereby designated", Hebrew Thought Compared With Greek, ET by J.L. Moreau, The Library of History and Doctrine (London: SCM Press, 1960) p. 91.

58. CD, III, 1, p. 236.

59. Gregory of Nyssa, The Great Catechism, ed. and ET by H. Wace and P. Schaff, A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church (Oxford: Parker & Co., and New York: The Christian Literature Co., 1893) 2nd series, vol. IV, Ch. VI, p. 480, Cf. "For even if the understanding looks upon any other existing things, reason observes in absolutely none of them the self-sufficiency by which they could exist without participating in true Being", The Life of Moses, ET, intro. and notes by A.J. Malherbe and E. Ferguson, pref. by J. Meyendorff, The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1978) para. 25, p. 60.

man "becomes a living soul as God breathes the breath of life into his nostrils". Barth sees considerable significance in this fact. "It is to man, and to man alone, that God gives breath in this manner.... And this, and this alone, is the distinguishing feature of man".⁶⁰ Because of this, man is constituted as the source of hope for all creation and as the one who can triumph over its aridity, barrenness and deadness. Man is therefore responsible to "both God and the creature" and "in this function he fulfills the meaning of his own existence".⁶¹ Barth's exposition at this point could not give a clearer and a more definitive statement of man's mutuality with and responsibility towards animals. Man's creation is thus "a sign" of the future destiny of creation itself.⁶² It is not surprising therefore that Barth takes this picture of man and links it first to Old Testament anthropology and secondly to the work of Jésus Christ. The man really spoken of in this first creation saga is none other than Jesus Christ. We are therefore "at the threshold of the history of the covenant and salvation".

What is the significance of this for the non-human creature? It could not be more telling. For if the analogy is to be pressed, the work of man, and supremely that of Jesus Christ, is the service of all creation. Barth does not articulate this possibility precisely, but it is the clear implication of the argument. For Jesus is what he is "for all Israel, all humanity, and even the whole world".⁶³ In the light of this powerful analysis we cannot but ask if the subsequent exposition of the saga will hold and develop this crucial reference. Will Barth now advance a creation centred understanding of man? Shall we reach a point at which we can surely indicate the value and meaning of the non-human? Shall we be able to point

60. CD, III, 1, p. 236; my italics.

61. CD, III, 1, p. 237.

62. CD, III, 1, p. 238.

63. CD, III, 1, p. 239; my italics.

decisively to one or more statements which summarise the purpose and end of the prefiguring creation which surrounds man and which he is purposed to serve? Yet Barth speaks of this saga as having not only a specific "climax and conclusion" but also only "one theme", namely the creation of man and woman. The creation of animals is only of "incidental significance".⁶⁴ Solitary man, that is single man, is incomplete. God willed to complete his creation in the making of man male and female. Why should this be so? Barth's answer is emphatic: "To be God's partner in this covenant, man himself needed a partner". Again, why should this be? Barth's answer is less than straightforward. According to him man needs to be both like God and unlike him within his very being. "To be created good" he argues,

man needs a being like him and yet different from him so that in it he will recognise himself but not only himself, since it is to him a Thou as truly as he is an I, and he is to it a Thou as truly as it is an I.⁶⁵

How are we to assess the adequacy of Barth's theological approach here? It is the perceived relationship between sexual differentiation and covenant partnership that is the underlying theological concern in Barth's exegesis. "God's whole intercourse with man", writes Barth, "will now be strictly related to man conjoined as male and female".⁶⁶ Much here is perceptive and illuminating. We may judge that he is on strong ground in perceiving relationships in their prefiguring capacity of love as illustrative of God's dealings with man. The traditional understanding to which he alludes in Ephesians 5:25 of a subordinate relationship between man and wife as exists between Christ and his Church cannot be overlooked. The love of God for man as with the love of man for woman is a matter of

64. CD, III, 1, p. 288.

65. CD, III, 1, p. 290.

66. CD, III, 1, p. 308.

order and design. But that point established there is still the separate question of what may be validly deduced from such an analogy and prototype.

Whilst it is evident that the question of relationships dominates the narrative, the anthropocentric reference is not its sole concern. Man is also set in two other distinct and fundamental relationships. The first in relation to the earth as a whole. He is to till the soil and serve the creative purpose of God within creation (Gen. 2:5b). More specifically within the garden in Eden man has, within limits, a commission to live together with the glory of what God has created. The second in relation to animals as represented by their being brought to him and his naming of them (Gen. 2:19). Barth pays little attention to this. While the "trans-action is not a divine experiment which failed" it is only a preparation and necessary expedient for the later section concerning the creation of woman.⁶⁷ But the significance of this passage is much greater than Barth will allow on two fronts. Firstly, God wills animals as a helpmeet (or partner, as Barth prefers) for man. They are not designed as a subsidiary or secondary thought to the special creation of man. Whatever else we must say about the subsequent development of this passage, it must be clear that God willed animals to be man's partner within creation. When Barth speaks of animals as "only a dark background to the true work towards which the narrative hastens" he supposes that animals are simply instrumental to man.⁶⁸ But what are we to draw from the corresponding fact that man did not choose animals? Much here depends upon our theological understanding of naming ('isha). It conveys at the very least a sense of belonging, that is, a deep and natural affinity between two beings. Of course there is in this relationship an order and a priority. Hence Barth writes of the naming of woman:

67. CD, III, 1, p. 293.

68. CD, III, 1, p. 291.

... the relationship is not one of reciprocity and equality
... The supremacy of man is not a question of value, dignity
or honour, but of order.⁶⁹

Therefore it is the same task that is required of man with woman that is also required of man with animals. In both relationships the naming implies both order and fellowship. In eager anticipation of the perceived climax to this narrative the point is overlooked that animals while not the intimate partner of man still belong to him (in this sense) and have a fundamental affinity with him.

The parallel of all this to the first saga will be noticed. Man and animals are created on the same day. While man shares the image of God he also shares with animals special blessing and the command to live and reproduce himself. Man stands over animals as one who possesses dominion or Herrschaft, that is, he participates in the God-like exercise of power with all its attendant responsibilities. It is only when we perceive that lordship, which carries with it a pre-eminence, also involves service and responsibility that we see how close we are to the picture of man as the tiller of the soil at the beginning of the second saga.⁷⁰

But parallels aside, it is only by selection that Barth can claim for the second saga that it issues in a special covenant relationship between God and man alone. Of these three relationships, to the earth, to animals, and to woman, clearly the latter relationship has special significance and import. In this other being of the same flesh man does indeed find his perfect partner. Here we may say is the innermost circle of grace. But

69. CD, III, 1, p. 301; my italics.

70. John Black writes: "Nowhere in the Jahwist narrative of the creation is man given dominion over the animals" and suggests that the two sagas are evidence of "two opposing views of the relationship between man and animals", The Dominion of Man: The Search for Ecological Responsibility (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1970) p. 41. But this can only be the case if 'dominion' and 'care' are opposing concepts. The evidence is against this as I have tried to indicate.

to accept this point and to allow it to have theological weight does not involve denying the other two fundamental relationships on which this other stands. Can it not be asked whether the structure and nature of man's relationship to woman is possible except on any other basis that man finds within creation parallel and paradigmatic relationships to his own? Indeed Wolff, beginning his theology of the Old Testament precisely from Barth's starting point here, maintains that the love between men and women and that "they live together in this way and not in warfare is an essential presupposition for the success of the stewardship of the world entrusted to them".⁷¹ And is it not true that man's relationship to animals in particular has such a nature of bondage and intimacy (save that of the actual intimate human partnership itself) that no full account of man can be offered that does not see him within these two greater and less determinations? .

Man as a Christological Paradigm

If this is so, the further question must be asked: why is it that Barth fails to relate these relationships to his own Christological method and understanding? Why is it only in relation to woman that the covenant relationship of man to God can be expressed? Simply put the answer appears to be that only in man's relationship to woman can man adequately prefigure the relationship between man and God. But accepting that such a relation can indeed signify and token God's relationship, even pre-eminently, it does not follow that other relationships may not also, perhaps to a lesser degree, prefigure that same relationship.

Once again it is not that there exists a significantly prefigurative element within the man-woman relationship that is questionable, but what Barth assumes and deduces from it. It is not in what Barth affirms but

71. Wolff, op. cit., p. 162; my italics. For details of his methodology see his introduction, esp. pp. 2 - 4.

in what he negatively implies that makes his exposition so problematic. Does Barth in failing to give an adequate account of man's other partnerships in creation fail at the same time to see their potential Christological significance? It is worth recalling at this point that his understanding of creation is vastly influenced and determined by his understanding of the Word of God itself. For it is in Jesus that we have the sure ontological basis of Creation, and it is in Jesus that we have the decisive notional relationship. But if this is so, how can it be that any relationship within creation is incidental or insignificant? Barth has shown earlier that he thinks there is and should be a connection:

The inner basis of the covenant is ... (that) which God has decreed in Himself as the covenant of the Father with His Son as the Lord and Bearer of human nature, and to that extent the Representative of all Creation.⁷²

That granted, it must follow that there can be no peculiarity, disposition, faculty or being within the created world which is irrelevant or incidental to the divine purpose of creation. The one overwhelmingly problematic aspect of Barth's treatment of this saga is that in separating and distinguishing man in partnership with himself from partnership with the rest of creation, he appears as a result to sever the link between the revealing Word and the creation in which the Word is revealed. St. Gregory warns us in this respect not to "take too narrow a view of things" when it comes to God's relationship with the world. "For when he considers the universe, can anyone be so simple-minded as not to believe that the Divine is present in everything, pervading, embracing and penetrating it? For all things depend on Him who is, and nothing can exist which does not have its being in Him who is".⁷³

72. CD, III, 1, p. 97 *my italics*.

73. Gregory of Nyssa, 'Address on Religious Instruction' in Christology of the Later Fathers, eds. E.R. Hardy and C.C. Richardson, The Library of Christian Classics (London: SCM Press, 1964) vol. III, p. 302. Cf. "Therefore the Command of God, His Logos, shining like a lamp in a closed room, illuminated the region under the heaven, making light separately from the world", Theophilus of Antioch, Ad Autolycum, text and ET by Robert M. Grant (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1970) p. 49.

One example may illustrate this further. Barth takes up the passage in Ephesians concerning the relationship between Christ and his Church. This passage is important in his development of the relationship between man and woman as a prototype of the relationship between Christ and his Church. But he does not refer to the opening verses in Ephesians which place Christ's redeeming work within the context of all that is. That God "might gather together into one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth ... " (1:10). What is striking here is the inclusive character of God's work in Christ. A work that extends through the Body to include all powers, principalities and possibilities of existence (1:21f.). Is there not here a Christological dimension and setting for the second creation saga?⁷⁴ Is it not possible to see man's relationship with creation as paradigm of Christ's relationship with all that is to become one in him? Is there not here both an analogy of order and affinity as with the relationship between man and woman? If the work of Christ is to bring together into unity the creation which testifies to him, should not the work of man be properly seen as inseparable from this unity of creation? This is not to deny the distinctive place of man within creation and that he singularly represents the place of incarnation. But in the light of this Christological model we have to ask whether the distinctive nature of man is not to prefigure in his relations with the natural world the unity that exists between Christ and his creation. It could be that in and through his relations in turn with the earth, its living beings and then finally within his own duality of male and female, that man represents as a microcosm as well as a prototype God's holistic redeeming

74. "The accord between the work of salvation and the eternal purpose of God is made especially clear in Eph. i. 3 - 14. To the actual 'blessing' in Christ, i. 3, corresponds the election in him before the foundation of the world, i. 4", N.A. Dahl, 'Christ, Creation and the Church', in The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology, ed. by W.D. Davies and D. Daube (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956) p. 432; see also Heinrich Schlier's Principalities and Powers in the New Testament, Quaestiones Disputatae 3 (Freiburg: Herder and Edinburgh/London: Nelson, 1961) esp. pp. 40 - 52.

purposes. This possibility frees us from the "misconception", against which Eric Mascall complains, "that Jesus Christ is of immense significance to human beings, but of no importance whatever to the rest of the universe".⁷⁵

In principle Barth appears to recognise this when he writes that "by its whole nature the creature is destined and disposed for this covenant".⁷⁶

But what is omitted is that the very structure of creation, both externally as creation and internally as election, and especially the living beings within it, are so bound up with man that they too share with him God's election and promise. Again in principle Barth sees the force of this when he writes of animals that in their relationship to man "they are what they are".⁷⁷ This does not mean as with the naming of woman that animals are simply man's property or exist only to serve his purposes. It is rather that their theological meaning and purpose are fundamentally related as can be grasped by the fact of common blessing and curse, or that they share together the judgement and mercy of God. But the question that must inevitably be raised is how far animals can on this understanding share the fundamentals of life with man without existing in

75. Mascall, The Christian Universe (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966) p. 91f. Mascall sees the universe as participating in the purposes of God through a process of "Christification" and thus moving towards a hope that "both the human race and the material universe, of which the human race is part, may be taken up into the very life of God himself and be transformed into a condition of unimaginable glory" (p. 109). Cf. here the notion of theosis, divinised life, in Gregory of Nazianzus, The Dynamics of Salvation: A Study in Gregory of Nazianzus by Donald F. Winslow, Patristic Monograph Series, No. 7 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1979) pp. 92f. For a modern restatement see Brian Horne's A World to Gain: Incarnation and the Hope of Renewal (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1984) esp. pp. 3 - 23. For discussion of Mascall's views see Whitehouse, 'New Heavens and a New Earth' in op. cit., pp. 205 - 206.

76. CD, III, 1, p. 97.

77. CD, III, 1, p. 292.

the covenant partnership with him. This is not to lose sight of the difference between them. But it is to question the total exclusivity of some of Barth's exposition, and this we should do if we are to hold that the disclosure of the revealed Word is the key to the theological understanding of creation itself. "A dogmatic theology that takes its inquiry seriously", writes Thomas Torrance, "cannot stop short of inquiring into the relevance of the concrete act of God in Jesus Christ for our redemption, but must go on to inquire into its relevance for all creation. It cannot stop short of the significance of Jesus Christ for the life of the Church but must go on to inquire into his universal and cosmic significance..."⁷⁸

Summary and Review: The Interaction between the Human and the Non-Human

To review this section as a whole, I shall very briefly summarise the ground covered in response to our two main questions:

- (A) How does non-human creation stand in relation to the human?
and
- (B) What end and purpose does non-human creation have?

(A)

We need to consider those common elements which the human and the non-human share in the second creation saga:

- (i) the free gift of life;
- (ii) common habitation;
- (iii) relationship of affinity with man, and
- (iv) the beneficence of God.

78. T.R. Torrance, Karl Barth: An Introduction to his Early Theology, 1910 - 1931, The Preacher's Library (London: SCM Press, 1962) p. 209; his italics. Barth appears to have grasped this at least in his Gifford Lectures in 1937: "What do we know from any other source about 'God', the 'world' and 'Man', and their mutual relations? ... By God's taking thought for man in Jesus Christ, now as in the past, He has provided us with knowledge about the creating, sustaining and governing of the world and man and about His glory and ours", The Knowledge of God and the Service of God according to the Teaching of the Reformation, ET by J.L.M. Haire and Ian Henderson (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1949) pp. 43/4; my italics.

(i) That life is grace, that is, free and generous gift, is one of Barth's underlying assumptions. While it is true that man is seen as sharing this gift in a special and particular way (see (b) later) life as given by the breathing of God's Spirit is the basis of all living beings. Although Barth everywhere assumes the common gift of life (albeit differentiated in the case of man) he nowhere explores precisely the profound and necessary bond that this implies for man and creation, and of creation, animals in particular. It must follow that the life of both is ontologically guaranteed. Not by any quality, disposition or faculty in either being but by virtue of their relationship to God who wills them to be. This point
7 vastly assumed by Barth is of considerable significance. For whatever distinction, difference or degree of both that separates man and animals they will always possess together the guarantee of their existence in their relationship to God.

(ii) As with the first saga, non-human beings have a domain and a territory which they share with man. This territory is the whole earth. What order and priority, if any, can be established from Genesis 2 is obscure. Vegetable life already exists and abounds before the existence of man who has the job of facilitating its fertility and thereby assuring its continuance. Man's place in the garden of Eden whilst especially suited for him in no way precludes the existence of other living beings, including trees and vegetation. Perhaps the most satisfactory interpretation is that which sees in its own order the mutuality of the human and the non-human within the garden and the whole earth. There is no hint at this stage of territorial disputes, of one claim of one kind of being over another kind of being. What is striking in the picture thus given is the interdependence, the symbiosis of all living things as given together by God.

(iii) And what underpins this arrangement and which can be said to be the

necessary prerequisite of such harmony? It is the relationship of man to creation understood in two distinct ways which serves the vitality and interdependence of the earth. Firstly, man is set within a relationship of service (not servility of course) to the earth as a whole. He will tend the soil and make life habitable for all. This point is expressed forcefully by Barth when he writes: "Seen even from this perspective he (man) has no independent position in the totality of creation". Moreover, "His (man's) nature is that of the earth on which he lives and moves".⁷⁹ Secondly, man names the animals. By this we understand a fundamental affinity and bond between them. Not, to be sure, a complete and intimate partnership, but a deeply held bond that is analogous to their special creation in the first creation saga on the sixth day. Barth makes great play of the fact that woman is presented to man and has to be recognised by him (2:23). But it is worth noting that animals too are recognised by man. Not as intimate partners but as partners none the less for their being, even more so than with the earth itself, is inseparable from man's own life and destiny. Once again Barth perceives this fundamental linkage but fails to develop the point precisely.

(iv) Finally, and pre-eminently, the non-human share with the human the profound beneficence of God. This is everywhere to be grasped from the second creation saga. That they exist complementarily; that this mutuality is good; that within the garden life flourishes and gives glory to God, are all signs of God's favour towards them. Even more fundamentally God wills to unite himself with this creation. Not merely to stand alongside it, but to enter within it, and to make his purpose manifest within the dust of the earth and the flesh and blood that comprise not only man but all breathing beings. Doubtless we see in this the special election of man as the appointed place for incarnation. But again it is arguable

79. CD, III, 1, pp. 235; 235/6.

whether this divine will could be operative at all within a creation that is incidental or irrelevant to this purpose. Since every part, particle and element within the created world is made with the knowledge and with the foresight that God so wills to enter into a unity with creation, everything made must be seen as belonging to the divine economy and therefore important to him. "It is our contention that precisely here", writes Daniel Deegan, "Barth's primary thought-form passes from that of realism to idealism". Realism is defined as the affirmation of the "independent reality of God and the substantiality of the creature" whereas the "element of idealism" shown in Barth "links all cosmological and anthropological reality directly to Jesus Christ as the prius, both ontologically and noetically, for all other being".⁸⁰ In this way, contrary to Barth's intention, the full reality and value of finite, existing creatures tends to be minimised.

Having identified those common elements we need to isolate those areas of difference:

- (a) sexual differentiation;
- (b) the breathing of life into man, and
- (c) the covenant partnership.

I shall discuss the first two together and the third separately.

(a) and (b) As we discovered in Barth's discussion of the first saga, it is not the making of man in God's image that is the crucial differentiating factor, but the making of man male and female so that in that capacity they may reflect and become a prototype of God's covenant relationship. In relation to the second saga it has a more definite

80. Deegan, 'The Christological Determinant in Barth's Doctrine of Creation', Scottish Journal of Theology, 14, 2 (1961) p. 126. For a developed critique of Barth's 'docetic' tendency see Wilfried Härle, Sein Und Grade: Die Ontologie in Karl Barth's Kirchlicher Dogmatik (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1975) esp. pp. 270-313.

Christological basis in its perceived relation to Yahweh and his people and then in turn to Christ and his Church. Barth thus stands in a long tradition of understanding human sexuality as a prefiguring of God's love for creation. But what is striking in his exposition is the claim that this sexual relationship constitutes in itself the one basic differential between man and animals. Of course this insight does not stand alone and is in turn crucially related to the notion of covenant partnership. But the one we are almost obliged to say follows from the other.

Allied to the question of sexual relations is the perceived distinction between man and animals which relate to the nature of their creation. Barth is emphatic on this point: "It is to man, and to man alone, that God gives breath in this manner". One might assume from this that Barth sees the breathing of the Spirit as the unique ontological foundation of man. But closer inspection does not support this view. He writes "the only difference between him and the beast is that he is dust formed into a human body", and again:

Primarily, then, the distinctive election of man is merely that he is formed from this dust as opposed to all other dust and given this form which is distinct from all other beasts.⁸¹

It is not the manner of man's creation that is seen to distinguish him but that he is made a human being. That this is how Barth understands the matter is confirmed later when he writes "the material difference emerges only in the fact that the continuation of the story is the history of the covenant ... of man and God".⁸² But Barth perhaps unwittingly is involved at this point in a circular argument. In seeking to establish what is the difference between man and animals in the covenant partnership he emphasises the special breath of Spirit within man and when seeking to

81. CD, III, 1, p. 236; my italics.

82. CD, III, 2, n. p. 396; my italics.

establish the specialness of man's breath within him he refers to the special covenant relationship. Does it matter that the precise grounds for man's election appear, after inspection, to be rather obscure? Cannot it simply be read that man does exist in this relationship and then pass on? The problem is, however, that Barth returns as we shall see time and time again to the fundamental distinctions we are exploring. They have material significance, in other words, for his subsequent exposition of man (see crucially, e.g. p.254). Because of this we are led once again to separate the question of fact from the question of significance. It is not (formally) the fact of sexual differentiation or the fact of being given the breath of the Spirit that distinguishes man from animals, but the significance he attributes to these facts. Perhaps some kind of clue to his thinking is given when he refers to the "only difference between him (man) and the beast is that he is dust formed into a human body".⁸³ Perhaps here Barth ends up indicating what in fact he would otherwise not wish to do, namely, that it is simply self-evident that human form or kind is different from animal form or kind.

(c) Leaving aside these presently unresolved questions, it is clear that the central thrust of Barth's understanding of the internal basis of creation is God's election of man and his covenant relationship with him. All other questions of difference may still issue fundamentally into this one theme. In summary, what is problematic about Barth's account is his apparent denial that animals too form part of the covenant relationship (in opposition to the biblical material), a view which elsewhere tumbles over into total anthropocentricity since the election of God has "as its sole content the fact that God elects man in order that man may be awakened and

83. CD, III, 1, p. 236.

summoned to elect God".⁸⁴ Secondly, there is his ambivalence or agnosticism about the significance of the other prefigurative and actual relations in which man is placed. For if, at heart, man is bound up inseparably with animal creation, it is difficult to see how they can be absolutely differentiated at this crucial point. Perhaps, however, we have missed a vital distinction in Barth's exposition. Since he does acknowledge in one instance that animals exist within the covenant relationship he is proposing unknown to us a distinction between existing within the covenant relationship and being an actual covenant partner. This would at least make sense of his claim that animals are not independent (selbständige) partners within the covenant relationship. It may be claimed, for example, that because animals cannot make free decisions the very possibility of their full inclusion within the covenant is eclipsed. This might be so if it was not for Barth's insistence that freedom, in the absolute or perhaps even relative sense, is not the deciding factor in determining covenant relations. Indeed as we have seen man's freedom even when faced with the possibility of it in the Garden in Eden is slight indeed. He cannot, through disobedience, wrench himself from God's covenant relationship. God is not unfaithful to the covenant. Divine sovereignty is what is established by this relationship and not even the most calamitous of human choices can reverse this priority. It cannot therefore be argued, on Barth's own assumptions, that free choice is a hallmark of being able to enter into the covenant relationship. When he speaks of animals as not being independent partners he overlooks his own earlier insistence that it is God's election, not the elected's own choice, determination, quality, adherence or disposition, that constitutes the covenant relationship.

84. Barth, Church Dogmatics, II, 2, The Doctrine of God, Part Two, ET G.E. Bromiley, J.C. Campbell, Iain Wilson, J. Strathearn McNab. H. Knight and R.A. Stewart (1957) 'The Eternal Will of God in the Election of Jesus Christ', p. 180; my italics. Again: "He (God) elected man as covenant-partner. In His Son He elected Himself as the covenant partner of man" (p. 166). Some might argue that in these instances Barth is speaking Christocentrically of God's humanity in Jesus, but, if it is a verbal slip, it is a consistent one throughout the Dogmatics.

Non-Human Creation without Covenant

(B) We need now to gether together material in relation to our second question concerning the purpose and end of the non-human.

The denial of the covenant relationship with animals means that all kinds of possibilities of articulating their theological purpose are robbed from us. The result is that we have largely to deal with hints and guesses as to what their purpose and end might amount to. Frequently Barth reaches pregnant points of exposition but refrains from giving them precise and concrete expression. It is worth gathering together some of these hints and points to see what they amount to:

- (i) Creation is one long preparation, and therefore the being and existence of the creature (Geschöpf) one long readiness, for what God will intend and do with it in the history of the covenant.

And Barth continues: "Its nature is simply its equipment for grace".⁸⁵

Clearly this statement at the beginning is full of promise. But is the promise realised? Are we shown how the nature of non-human creation is equipped to participate in the grace of God?

- (ii) "The main interest now" in the second saga is how creation "pre-figures and to that extent anticipates the covenant relationship".⁸⁶

Creation, Barth emphasises, is not the covenant. The two must not be confused. But how does the non-human creation prefigure and anticipate the covenant?

- (iii) In its relationship to man the non-human creation acquires "meaning and purpose". But which purpose or purposes precisely?

85. CD, III, 1, p. 231; my italics

86. CD, III, 1, p. 232.

(iv) "For in this account (the second saga) it (creation) is a kind of end in itself".⁸⁷ But what kind of "end" or "self-purpose" (Selbstzweck) has it?

(v) In this function (serving the earth) man is responsible to both God and the creature. And in this function he fulfils the meaning of his own existence.⁸⁸

How does man fulfil his meaning in the serving of creation if every part of this creation is outside the elected covenant fellowship?

(vi) Man created and chosen is a "sign of the future He (God) has destined for all creation as such".⁸⁹ But what is the future of creation? Is there a "future" for animals? What future has non-human creation outside the covenant relationship? The point is striking because previously Barth writes of how the fact that "it is man God has chosen" is a sign of the future for "all creation".⁹⁰ The problem is compounded further by the linking of the choosing of man to the election of Jesus Christ. Since the first man really spoken of in this saga is none other than Jesus Christ, Barth has to say that Jesus is the one given "for ... even the whole world".

He is the man who did not return empty handed, but with the spoils of hope, to the earth from which he was taken but for which He was also given.⁹¹

If Barth is serious in his exposition here, and his conclusion to the effect that this is the decisive Christian interpretation of the saga would suggest that he is, what we shall necessarily look for in his subsequent exposition is some statement of how precisely the work of Jesus is for "even the whole world".

87. CD, III, 1, p. 235.

88. CD, III, 1, p. 237.

89. CD, III, 1, p. 238.

90. CD, III, 1, pp. 236/7.

91. CD, III, 1, p. 239; my italics.

- (vii) It was not because man needed vegetation that God had to plant it, but because God willed to plant the earth that he created man.

Once again a potentially telling statement. It invites two questions:

- (i) how and in what way must man then serve the creation of God? and
(ii) since by analogy and design the saga at this point speaks of Jesus Christ, how and in what way must Jesus serve the creation of God? What Barth may, however, deduce from this relationship of service is confused by his previous sentence which begins:

That man cannot be lord of the earth but can only serve
it is decided already in the description of the terminus
a quo of creation in v. 5.⁹²

This seems to imply that lordship and service are at odds with each other. In fact as we saw from his handling of the first saga, it is precisely because man is called to participate and represent the lordship of God in creation that he has responsibility for it and must act as one like a steward who must render up some account. Does not the lordship of Christ find expression in his service? Indeed is not the lordship of Christ signified, made concrete and altogether rightly epitomised by his sacrificial giving which in turn represents the self-giving of God himself? And if this is true of Christ, shall it not necessarily be true of man?

- (viii) "It is in their (animals') relationship to him (man) that they are what they are."⁹³ It is here more than anywhere else that we can perceive Barth's tendency to assume the purpose and meaning of animals within that of man. The naming of animals must mean that they are tied in some sense to man. But Barth does not see that this makes the significance of animals greater rather than lesser. It stands in odd relationship to his insistence that animals are not man's covenant partner in

92. CD, III, 1, pp. 242; 242/3.

93. CD, III, 1, p. 292.

creation. For if it is really true that the bond that unites animals and man is so strong that no other statement of their purpose and end can be described other than in relation to him then it must follow that everything Barth wishes to claim for the special relationship of man to God must be claimed at least in principle for the relationship between man and animals as well. Of course that is precisely the conclusion Barth does not wish to draw from the second saga. But we have to raise whether the logic of his method does not point in a wholly different direction. Barth's subsequent point that man does not recognise in animals his intimate partner cannot alter the fact that there is a profound bond between them.

In the light of (vi) and (vii) it is clear that whatever reason there may be for the reluctance on Barth's part to explore more fully the doctrine of the non-human it does not stem from his Christological methodology. Here at least he cannot claim to be constrained by his perceived centre of theological understanding. He appears to abandon anthropocentricity at the beginning of his exposition only to take it up again more forcefully at the end. Thus he is able to write in his final footnote to this section: "The aim of creation was the completion of one man in his existence as man and woman".⁹⁴ We cannot help wondering whether in this process there has not been some reversal of insight and understanding. For at the end we have again to ask what account has been given of the non-human? What meaning, purpose and end has it? If it is incidental how can Jesus give it a future? More fundamentally, why should it exist at all? Why should the Word which brings all things to be in his co-creativity with the Father, make beings which are substantially irrelevant and incidental to the further works of reconciliation and redemption?

94. CD, III, 1, n. p. 328; my italics.

CHAPTER THREE: GOD'S YES: THE REALITY AND GOODNESS OF CREATION

SURVEYING THE GROUND: (i) God's benevolence to man

The third (and final) major section of Part One is entitled 'The Yes (Ja)¹ of God the Creator' and is divided into three further sections. The first is called 'Creation as Benefit' (Schöpfung als Wohltat).

Barth now begins the task of examining the "distinctive nature" of creation "in itself and as such". One point emerges clearly. The divine work of creation is a work of a specific character and design. Revelation enables the perception of "this intrinsic character" which is solely due to the fact of its Creator.² What we see in this creation nothing less than the goodness of God. Divine creation is therefore divine benefit. The meaning of God's "yes" involved in the allowing of creatures distinct from himself needs to be pondered. Creation is "election" (Erwählung), "acceptance" and "blessing". "We are not free to think or speak in this matter otherwise or even uncertainly or equivocally" writes Barth.³ God could not have united himself with creation if he had rejected creation or regarded it as unworthy in some way. The divine "yes" is not a divine "no"!

Barth insists that the notion of creation as benefit must flow from the concept of covenant. If we seek, or stand by, some insight, other than the biblical witness that creation is good, our affirmation of the covenant and its fulfilment in Christ is correspondingly weakened. If we do so, the notions of creation, Creator and creature are "also robbed of their content" for "what distinguishes them from neutral categories (such as operation, cause and effect, or art, artist and work of art)" when the notion of covenant is lost?⁴ Once we slip from the full biblical witness we end up with

1. The German Ja is more emphatic than the English "yes". It implies acceptance and commitment as well as assent, e.g. Ja is the only word uttered by a bride and groom in a German wedding ceremony.

2. CD, III, 1, p. 331.

3. CD, III, 1, p. 331.

4. CD, III, 1, p. 334.

the idea of a hostile nature or even that creation is evil. As witnesses of this Barth gives the examples of Marcion and Schopenhauer (see pp. 113-117 for discussion).

The distinctiveness of Christian doctrine here consists simply in the distinctiveness of its source, namely revelation. While other "world-views" (Weltanschauungen and Weltbilder, see pp. 118-120) have the problem of "pure becoming" inherent or "objectively present" in them all "whether perceived, distorted or ignored" and while these will be interesting or perhaps fascinating to the Christian, doctrine "destroys itself" if it embraces them in any form. Again whilst theology must not lay down or decide in advance what "new 'dimensions' myth might one day be able to express itself, philosophy to think, or science to investigate" and whilst it is "improper for theology to assume a priori an attitude of scepticism",⁵ if any system is to be of "real interest" its notion of pure becoming must be "an affirmation both of that which becomes and of that which has become". Put simply: there is no "equivalent" philosophical basis to revelation.⁶ To do justice to the subject matter of Creator and creation a philosophical world-view "must itself become theology".

Barth spells out in six brief points the implications of a distinctive Christian doctrine in this matter. Firstly, "it cannot itself become a world-view". If it does, it can only remain just that. Secondly, "It cannot base itself on any world-view". For no world-view can maintain the themes of Christian doctrine. Thirdly, "It cannot guarantee any world-view",⁷ and fourthly, it cannot partially accept or reject any world-view. While Christian doctrine does not seek to contradict them, there is an inevitable and radical contrast between them. Fifthly, Christian doctrine

5. CD, III, 1, pp. 341; 341/2.

6. CD, III, 1, p. 342.

7. CD, III, 1, p. 343.

does not claim "a better but a different type of knowledge which does not exclude the former but is developed in juxtaposition and antithesis to it". Encounter with alternative views helps doctrine to elucidate and clarify itself. And finally, "dogmatics pursues its own special task" arising from the church's life and proclamation. It is not "embarrassed" to admit that the creation sagas expect "no material or direct help from any world-view, ancient, modern or future". It is thus seen that natural theology and the problems and questions posed thereby "cannot be taken into account".⁸

(ii) The reality of creaturely freedom

The second sub-section is entitled 'Creation as Actualisation'. Creation is not a dream or an illusion, it really exists. This follows from the "yes" of God to what he has created, namely that he has in reality "actualised it". But this is not a simple observation, it is an element in the total knowledge given by revelation. The philosophical problem of reality and perception is considerable. It seems obvious that our consciousness should imply existence and "the supposition pointing in this direction is irrefutable, but it is not unprovable".⁹ It is not a certainty that our perceptions give a true account of reality or that they are in fact real. "Thus in point of fact we live without knowing that we are or that anything is", summarises Barth. We can only affirm with any sense of security that something is, when we are "authorised and compelled" to do so.¹⁰

We have to be told by our Creator in order to know that we exist. Barth alludes in passing to the traditional argument of Anselm concerning ontology. "It may well be the case," he argues, "that in such an argument we have to do with the most characteristic and immediate act of the human mind".¹¹ For human beings to desire to know that they exist and thus "it may well be that our consciousness of God - or, if we like to put it this

8. CD, III, 1, p. 344.

9. CD, III, 1, p. 345.

10. CD, III, 1, p. 346.

11. CD, III, 1, p. 347.

way, our consciousness of a perfect being which as such also exists - is the crowning testimony to this supreme desire which in itself is so obviously deep rooted and inescapable".¹² But desire, and attaining desire, are two different things. Unless we are told by God that we exist, we can only live as if we do. "We emphasise", argues Barth, "that this awareness of creaturely existence rests wholly and exclusively upon God's self-communication in revelation".¹³

Yet the precise point of Christian affirmation, and also indeed of proof has still to be reached. The proof of man's existence is not only that God is gracious and beneficent or indeed that his creation discloses a covenant between them but supremely in the fact that God is united to his creation in Jesus Christ. In Christ can we truly say "creation is actualisation". In this sense "the Christian church can and will always offer such a proof".¹⁴ The Cartesian proof of conscious existence (discussed in detail with reference to Descartes' Meditationes de prima philosophia, see pp. 121-124) is replaced by a Christological proof of man's existence. We know that we exist because God has affirmed our humanity in Jesus Christ.

(iii) Creation for Jesus Christ

The third sub-section of the third major section which concludes Part One is entitled 'Creation as Justification' (Schöpfung als Rechtfertigung). How can man know that the world around him, including his existence itself, is indeed favoured by God, that is, that God truly wills his existence and that it is well pleasing to him? The question follows from the problem of actualisation. For "If the creature cannot know of itself that it is", questions Barth, "how can it know of itself that it is good?" If he is confidently to affirm this, "he must receive an intimation to this effect from the source which has justified it".¹⁵ Even the "Deus Optimus Maximus"

12. CD, III, 1, p. 348.

13. CD, III, 1, p. 349.

14. CD, III, 1, p. 365.

15. CD, III, 1, p. 367.

is still in need of justification.¹⁶ But when Barth affirms the justification of creation in the light of the self-disclosure of God, he is not doing so to "rescue the optimistic thesis". It is in no way a reinforcement of ordinary human feeling or opinion. The knowledge (Erkenntnis) of God and who he is, and how he stands in relation to us, "shines authoritatively and thus liberates us from all human opinions".¹⁷ We simply must not confuse Erkenntnis with what our human feelings may or may not indicate about the pleasantness of existence. "What we consider to be the truth about the created world is one thing", argues Barth, "Quite another is the covenant of grace, the work of Jesus Christ, for the sake and in fulfilment of which creation exists as it is".¹⁸

There is, of course, a "brighter side" of creation. But the justification of creation is "not connected with the fact that the sun shines, that there are blossoms and fruits, pleasing shapes, colours and sounds, realities and groups of realities which preserve and foster life, purposeful relationships and order, intelligible, controllable and serviceable elements and powers, which enlighten the created mind of man, speak to his heart, and in some way correspond with his will for life and foster it".¹⁹ The "yes" of God the Creator certainly includes the "yes" of the human creation, but it is in no way dependent on it, indeed is wholly independent of it. Equally the justification of creation is to be distinguished from the "darker side" of human life. "The justice of creation", writes Barth, "is not compromised by the fact that the heavens grow dark, that harmony is engulfed in disharmony and teleology obscured by senselessness".²⁰

In comparison with the goodness of God, creation "is not good and he (the

16. CD, III, 1, p. 368.

17. CD, III, 1, p. 369. Erkenntnis is something that one has just come to know or realise, as opposed to Wissen, which is knowledge in the static sense.

18. CD, III, 1, p. 370; his italics.

19. CD, III, 1, p. 371.

20. CD, III, 1, p. 372.

creature) cannot with conviction close his eyes to its riddles, paradoxes and contradictions".²¹ Thus man is called upon to weep and to laugh. He cannot avoid, and should not attempt to do so, the misery of existence. But neither on the other hand should it lead him to despair of the Erkenntnis of the justifying power of God which lies beyond all earthly sensations.

To secure his line of exposition, Barth now offers four points of lengthy explanation. The first concerns his Christological interpretation of theodicy. Why is it that divine revelation both transcends and implies "these two aspects and judgments" (the brighter and the darker sides) of human existence? It is here that we grasp the profound connection between the Creator and creature that binds the covenant relationship. There is "a twofold determination" of exaltation and wretchedness.²² Since "God created man to lift him in His own Son into fellowship with Himself", this exaltation "presupposes a wretchedness of human and all existence which His own Son will share and bear". This "two-fold and contradictory determination" encompassing as it does all human joy and misery, hope and despair, is founded on the will of God. It is his will that creation be for Jesus Christ. This is really the command of God", argues Barth, "that we should rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep". It is only the sceptic and the indifferent, "the indolent and neutral" who oppose the will of God.²³

Secondly, how is it that God transcends these two aspects? Our rejoicing and sorrowing are "absolutely" transcended because God himself "assumes both aspects of existence" and "authenticates the matter in His own person, making Himself the subject of this two-fold determination of being".²⁴

Barth has now set the stage for the third and "decisive point" of explanation.

21. CD, III, 1, p. 373.

22. CD, III, 1, p. 375.

23. CD, III, 1, p. 376.

24. CD, III, 1, p. 377.

In the light of the recognition of the two-fold contradiction of human existence are we led to posit a duality either in the created world or indeed in God himself? "And is this duality its eternal destiny?" he asks.²⁵ Once we recognise that there is "no human basis" on which we can establish any co-ordination of these aspects, we are led to the further recognition that the Creator himself "willed to endure, and has endured, and still endures the contradiction in creaturely life".²⁶ Barth's determination to retain the unity of God in the face of this discovered earthly contradiction pushes him to the limits of divine impassibility. "A further step has necessarily to be risked" he continues. For if there is not to be "an ultimate antithesis of two spheres, of a parallel infinity of the two aspects, of a stable balance or absolute symmetry of these two factors, or an eternal dualism", we can only affirm that God does not eternally suffer but that in the person of Jesus Christ, he only "transiently shared the pain and death of creation".²⁷ The Creator has done this in a moment but that moment "has now passed".²⁸ Thus God contains within himself the perfection of the creature by his own intervention and sovereignty. This is an eternal "no" to the "sphere of nothingness" which continually threatens the being of creation.

Barth's fourth and final point returns him to the theme with which he began Part One. God's self-disclosure reveals and "mediates a secure, decisive and binding knowledge of all this".²⁹ We have no point of true reference other than the work of God himself. No human feelings, opinions, views or sensations can bring us to the point of knowing what we do on the basis of revelation. Are we not at this point in a circle? Indeed we are. It

25. CD, III, 1, p. 378.

26. CD, III, 1, p. 380.

27. CD, III, 1, p. 383.

28. CD, III, 1, p. 384.

29. CD, III, 1, p. 386.

is "a circle in which we may and must move, but in which we can do so only in one direction, and which we can no longer leave".³⁰

The Election and Goodness of All Cr ation

What then is the distinctive nature of this creation? "What does creation mean as a divine work undertaken and completed to this end and in this sense?"³¹ Creation has a "specific character and design" is the first level of answer. To recognise creation as creation involves recognising its distinct shape, character and design. These things are not secondary to theological insight but integral to it. "What takes shape in it", he writes, "is the goodness of God". Barth also refers to the view of the Early Church and the Reformers that creation is to be seen as "an act of divine gratia, misericordia, bonitas". That this is the case can only be seen in relation to the fact of covenant. "The process", writes Barth, "whose fundamental purpose ... is the history of salvation which culminates in Jesus Christ, cannot itself be hostile or indifferent, but can only be a benefit and can only be understood as such".³² But this being so, what must also follow is that every part, particle and aspect of the entire creation must stand in relationship to the fulfilment of that creation in the covenant and be relevant to it. Barth does not bring out this point precisely but it is necessarily implicit in what he writes. Once the fact of the beneficence of God the Creator has been grasped, it is not possible to take from any living thing the guarantee that this beneficence represents.

30. CD, III, 1, p. 388.

31. CD, III, 1, p. 330.

32. CD, III, 1, n.p. 330. But a "benefit" for whom? Adopting this standpoint from the Reformers, Barth also takes over the largely anthropocentric concept of "benefit" or "use" of creation which certainly Calvin assumes, e.g. God "willed to commend his providence and fatherly solicitude towards us, in that before he fashioned man, he prepared everything he foresaw would be useful and salutary for him", Institutes of the Christian Religion, ET by F.C. Battles (London, 1961) vol. 1, p. 182; cited and discussed by Passmore, op. cit., pp. 12 - 13.

The divine "yes" must be a "yes" to all creation or it is no "yes" at all.

The nature of the divine "yes" involves election (Erwählung) and acceptance. How can we know this? The logic of the incarnation makes it inescapable. For "As God in creation manifests His inner being outwardly ... He says "Yes" not only to Himself but also to another". The affirmation of creation as the work of God turned outwards means that God actually "participates in the right, dignity, and goodness of the 'Yes' in which He is God by Himself".³³ Thus perceived, it must follow once again that all creation participates in the "yes" that is God's "yes" to himself within the act of incarnation. "Isn't the Word always already revelatory", asks William Gray, "in that it reveals, discovers, makes manifest the world?"³⁴ What is at stake in Barth's discussion here is not some attribute,

33. CD, III, 1, p. 331. Erwählung (election) is a key concept in Barth. It is defined as a "special decision with a special intention in relation to a special object" (CD, III, 2, p. 142). He nowhere defines it in strict opposition to non-human creation, but it can be safely assumed that election almost always refers to man or Jesus, or both. Whether it needs to be defined solely with these points of reference is another matter. See H.H. Rowley's The Biblical Doctrine of Election (London: Lutterworth Press, 1950) and Stuart McLean's Humanity in the Thought of Karl Barth (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1981) pp. 26ff. for a recent exposition and discussion.

34. Gray, 'The Myth of the Word Discarnate', Theology, 88, 722 (March 1985) p. 114; my italics. "Could it be that the Word is in essence incarnate, that incarnation is not the passion of the discarnate Word, but the Word's self-presentation as he really is?". In this way incarnation can be properly seen as "an ontological characteristic of the Word". His conclusion is startlingly relevant: "The myth of the discarnate Word is an expression of this craving for a false transcendence, and is deeply anthropomorphic and idolatrous in that it fashions God after an idealized image of ourselves. Meanwhile, a suffering and threatened world awaits the emergence of a humanity which does not have to prove and secure itself by domination, but which will allow itself to be fashioned into the image of a God whose glory is displayed in his self-emptying into a fully human death and life" (pp. 115 and 117; his italics). Cf. C.E. Gunton: "The paradox must remain: that the absolute claim of God is exercised through the contingency and vulnerability of the human. And this means that the function of a doctrine of the political Christ or, better, the Lordship of Christ in its political implications, is to teach that power does not grow out of the barrel of a gun ... but from the lordship of the crucified", Yesterday and Today: A Study of Continuities in Christology (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983) p. 199.

quality or desirable faculty within creation itself but God's own determination, nature and freedom. Man and all living things come to be as a consequence of God's own affirmation and election of himself. The goodness of creation can therefore be grasped theologically as the movement of God to man, and through man, to all men and all creation.

God Rejoices in Differentiated Being

Moreover God's relationship with creation is not a static "yes".

uncomp. part | A once and for all event (although it is this too) by which we may dimly judge a general undefined beneficence. Rather "God rejoices in another which as such has not shared in the divine being", and again "He honours and approves this other within the limits of its distinct being". This point requires some elucidation. God's election of himself as man does not involve the abolition of humanity or the destruction of creatureliness. God elects within himself the reality of created humanity in a way that brings creaturehood to himself, maintaining and not rejecting its difference and distinctiveness. From the standpoint of the non-human there is here a point of relevance. The creativity of God recognises and respects the distinctive divisions within creation itself. The fact of distinction and difference are not in themselves barriers to the creative designs of God; they are inseparable from them. The logic of the incarnation, and in particular the exaltation of man involved with it, is such that it underlines the rightness of all created being, distinct and differentiated as it is. Barth does not develop this point in relation to the non-human creation but it is implicit in what he writes. One further conclusion follows from this: it is not the fact of difference that constitutes the beneficence of God. It is not that there exists within man such and such a quality, aptitude or ability that qualifies him for the place of incarnation, but rather God's sovereign will and decree. To the question, therefore: Why does God create so many distinct and differentiated beings blessed by his beneficence and enlivened by his Spirit - beings of which he apparently has no need - there can at this stage be only one answer, namely that

he rejoices in them. This has profound implications as Torrance observes: "If the Church believes that Christ is the Light of life, why should it not believe that that Light, as it rises and shines upon men, is reflected in the being and existence of the cosmos ... And why then should the people of God not rejoice more than any others in all creaturely being and activity and in the fulfilment of creaturely existence and meaning?".³⁵

Barth seems to develop this point when he writes of created beings as "necessarily and completely the object of the divine good-pleasure". Only that which is not created, the realm of the non-being, can be objects of God's wrath and judgement. Moreover God's disposition here is "the root, the foundation and the end of the divine creation". That it is real, and not unreal; that it is creation rather than a shadow is the continuing sign that God wills it to be and that it possesses a future with him. In the incarnation we see that God "made Himself the responsible Guarantor of it".³⁶ In this context Barth illustrates the force of the divine "no". Only when creation is understood as creation, as a deliberate and continued activity on God's part, and therefore as "yes" to being in this distinct way, can we realise the possibility of the divine "no" which must relate to all that is really or hypothetically unreal. But the question may be raised: What of the "end" (Ziel)³⁷ of the whole creation which has its root and foundation in the good-pleasure of God? The point to grasp at this stage is that creation does have an end with God. Human speculation, discussion or opinion, however realistic or theologically informed, cannot separate the creation from its Creator who is in this sense both its origin and destiny. We shall need to explore further what kind of Ziel creation may be said to have in the light of Barth's subsequent thesis as a

35. Torrance, op. cit., pp. 213/4.

36. CD, III, 1, p. 331; my italics.

37. Ziel is "end" in the sense of "aim", something one is heading for, not just end as in a physical sense, or end of a story.

whole, but as this juncture we can only point to what appears to be the unmistakable conclusion that in God the guarantee of creation is ensured through his own mysterious activity of reconciliation and redemption.

The Divorce between Covenant and Creation

We have seen how Barth holds absolutely to the binding relationship between creation and covenant. Any loosening or obscuring of this relationship means that "it (creation) collapses altogether if this bond is dissolved". This, of course, needs to follow from all that Barth has previously stated. Every part, particle and aspect of creation is to find its meaning and significance within the covenant relationship with God. But his subsequent statement throws this emphasis into relief:

That God's creation has the character of benefit derives everywhere, as we have seen, from the fact that its fundamental purpose lies in the covenant between God and man. 38

Barth's writing is ambiguous here. At first sight it might appear that he is referring to God's humanity in Jesus and therefore only maintaining an anthropocentricity in a Christologically qualified sense as he justified at the beginning of Part One (see p. 14). But subsequent reading indicates that "man" in this context means humanity in general and thus the whole force of the repeated assertion that creation and covenant belong together is fundamentally weakened. Does Barth here avoid the "naive and direct" Anthropozentrismus against which he had earlier protested?

The primary difficulty is that Barth does not clarify the sense of his assertion that the "benefit" (Wohltat) derives from "its fundamental purpose ... in the covenant between God and man". Is this fundamental purpose inclusive or exclusive of the rest of creation? There are a variety of possible senses here: (i) that man focusses the beneficence of God; or (ii) that man represents the beneficence of God; or (iii) that man actualises

38. CD, III, 1, p. 332; my italics.

(through his capacity for gratitude and praise) the beneficence of God, or (iv) that man only and solely represents the beneficence of God in creation. This lack of clarity opens Barth up to the charge that he does not actually grasp any significance of the covenant for non-human creatures.

The ramifications of this become clearer as Barth intensifies his insistence that creation and covenant belong together. He speaks with a renewed sense that the affirmation of the beneficence of creation is indeed a bold step. But this affirmation can be made "responsibly" because it is "a statement of faith which implies knowledge and of which an account can be given". This is only true because creation can only be known as creation and therefore as good because this knowledge is inseparable from knowledge of Jesus Christ. "For although it can have indirect validity where the connection is externalised and nominalised but has not completely disappeared and is not utterly denied" he nevertheless maintains that "it is rendered quite ineffectual when the divorce between these two spheres is logically carried through".³⁹ But if this is right and the relationship between creation and covenant is of such inner logical necessity, it must be questioned whether in failing to grasp and articulate the meaning of non-human creation within the covenant, the actual affirmation which Barth wishes to make is correspondingly weakened. Is there not here the precise danger of "divorce" between these two spheres against which he so eloquently warns us? For if, on the very basis of theological insight, we can deny that there exists, or exists meaningfully, or that there exists in relationship with those agents which represent the meaning, a purposeful relationship between creation and covenant are we not presented here with a separation of the "inner connection" to which he wishes to testify? Barth concludes this particular part by insisting that "where the covenant is no longer seen in creation, or creation in the covenant,

39. CD, III, 1, p. 333.

the affirmation that creation is benefit cannot be sustained".⁴⁰ In assessing this we need to recall the earlier statement that creation is not itself the covenant; it is not the brute fact of creation which constitutes the covenant relationship. But equally, if Barth is right that the covenant is nevertheless the "inner basis of creation", and that there exists a fundamentally important "inner connection", the question must be raised as to whether he has helped us to see what he wishes to affirm so strongly, namely that the covenant must be seen within the creation if we are to hold the affirmation of the beneficence of God the Creator. Is not Barth's failure to grasp the significance of the covenant relationship for the non-human creation a fundamental flaw in advocating such an inner connection and correspondence?

Barth in a lengthy footnote to this section gives a detailed account of the views of Marcion and Schopenhauer. As he sees it both views "have at the decisive point, namely, in the opposition to the affirmation that divine creation is benefit, a common origin as well as a common conclusion". Thus whilst both hold out for a separation of creation and covenant "they develop this in opposite directions". The problem with Marcion, on one hand, is that he looks exclusively to the covenant. In his insistence upon the evil of creation (by an inferior god) and the necessity of further redemption by the true God, we can say that "there are few theologians who refer faith so strictly to God's revealing work in Christ".⁴¹ Marcion's theology depends entirely upon the release from the evil of creation which Christ alone can bring. Barth in a brilliant piece of writing clearly shows the essential point of seeing creation and covenant as integral to each other. If creation is to stand at a permanent distance from the activity of redemption through the covenant then it must follow that creation

40. CD, III, 1, p. 334.

41. CD, III, 1, n. p. 337.

is evil or will remain unredeemed. The weakness in Marcion's thesis is that Christ is essentially docetic, thus making it impossible for him either to enter into the evil of the world or to truly redeem it. Therefore, Barth writes: "this means above all that there cannot be a Gospel of this unknown God because even in Christ He has confronted man in alien form, and remained alien, not entering into solidarity with him". But Barth, for all his brilliant exposition here, does not see that his own treatment of creation and covenant suffers from a tendency which fails to reconcile these two spheres. Can it not be asked whether his continued and, at times, exclusive focus upon man makes his Christ alien to the non-human creation which God has brought into being? Is there not such a strain of anthropocentricity here that if we follow it too closely, we too shall be caught in the same divorce between creation and the covenant itself, except at a different point? Barth goes on to indicate the aloofness of a God who in Marcion's terms cannot of necessity become incarnate within an evil creation. The point must be seriously taken, but his own articulation of God's relationship with the created world (even in a derived sense through mankind) currently lacks so much definition and positive illustration that we may wonder whether this God is not properly to be seen as fundamentally aloof from the creation he has made. In this sense Barth fails to answer the question he set himself in the opening of this section, namely "What does creation mean ... ?"⁴² We have yet to be given a full account of the meaning of the covenant for creation as a whole. Since creation and covenant are intertwined there needs be correspondence and significance at every turn between them. Again Barth appears to recognise this for he writes "The aim and fulfilment of the real covenant is Christ as very God and very man in one person". In this clearly Christologically defined sense there is hope for all creation because "the real

42. CD, III, 1, p. 330; my italics.

covenant does not exclude but includes Israel and the Old Testament, the Creator and creation".⁴³ But whilst the meaning or would-be meaning of creation is implicit in at least some of what Barth writes, its full elucidation and positive description is often lacking.

Schopenhauer, on the other hand, succeeds in reaching the same conclusion "by abstracting in the opposite direction and focusing his attention on creation". By concentrating upon the individual human will, its desires, frustrations and necessarily incomplete fulfilments, Schopenhauer shows us a world of "perpetual deception". Thus life is continual suffering; each new effort of the will only brings new possibilities of misery. Accordingly human history "is one great sphere of accident and error, of folly and evil, in which what is excellent is only an exception proving the rule".⁴⁴ According to Barth, Schopenhauer's "view of the world is inevitably as god-less as Marcion's view of God as world-less".⁴⁵ Barth's summary of Schopenhauer is both perceptive and illuminating. Thus in a few
× pages he condenses a biting orthodox critique deploying it skilfully to enrich his insistence upon the need to bind the notions of creation and covenant together. But once again does Barth himself escape the critique he proposes with such force on others? He writes:

What remains of Creator, creature and creation in Schopenhauer's world view is simply man himself, whose will has its focal point in the genitals, and whose power of contemplation is at once the author and weaver and the bearer and the contemplator of the veil of Maya.

But does not Barth's own articulation of the issue run the risk of severing man from creation and therefore from the fullness of purpose within the covenant relationship? To abstract God from man is indeed serious, but, so too by default, imprecision or ambiguity, is it to abstract man

43. CD, III, n. p. 338; my italics.

44. CD, III, 1, n. p. 338.

45. CD, III, 1, n. p. 338.

from creation, and thus view him alone as the seeming totality of divine relationship within the earthly sphere. Of course it is not Barth's intention to abstract man from creation; to set man adrift from the richness of the created world or to suppose that he represents the totality of it. But what we do have to contend with in Barth is such a colossal focusing on man, such a weight of theological anthropology that much that needs to be said is either left unsaid or pushed to the margin of theological enquiry. In contrast Torrance posits the clear necessity of the "Covenant of Grace" embracing "not only man but the whole of creation". Since this covenanted correspondence cannot repose upon "some inherent relation of likeness" between man and God, but solely upon "the gracious decision of God to create a world utterly distinct from Him", we have no alternative but to assume that all created things have such a "close relation with Him that it may reflect His Glory".⁴⁶

Two further points may illustrate our difficulty. Firstly, Barth accepts that "When creation is viewed in isolation from God, as the world of human will and idea, it can only be shrouded in the darkness in which Marcion envelops it by his isolation of God from creation".⁴⁷ The point is finely made. But it also follows that any part of creation which is seen in isolation from God, and more precisely, whose theological significance is insufficiently grasped, also runs the danger of appearing to sever the revealing Word from the creation in which the revealing Word is revealed. What cannot be said from a theological perspective is that the creation as a whole stands outside the creative and redeeming purposes of God. From a human perspective of course, theologically uninformed as it is, we may often see it that way: the world may appear to us to be from time to time all that Schopenhauer thought it to be: " ... a sea full of rocks and

46. Torrance, Theological Science (London: Oxford University Press, 1969) p. 68.

47. CD, III, 1, n. p. 339.

whirlpools with the certain prospect of shipwreck" as Barth eloquently puts it.⁴⁸ But Barth fails to see that his own method constrains him at this point to offer a full statement of the positive meaning of each and every part of creation precisely in order to dispel the darkness of uninformed human perception. The second point is related to the first. Schopenhauer apparently failed to grasp an adequate knowledge of man in the world because he failed to grasp the knowledge of man-with-God. "In the last resort he (Schopenhauer) can arrive at this knowledge only because he has viewed the being of the world ... and man without and apart from God", writes Barth. Thus "he has not seen the real but the unreal creation in all its abstractness and unreality because divorced from the covenant and the divinity of the man Jesus ... (he) has necessarily to understand and speak of it in those terms".⁴⁹ That being so, it has yet to be sufficiently explained how it is that knowledge of the divine-man Jesus actually gives us meaning - of depth and profundity - about creation and the non-human within it. To be fair to Barth he sees clearly how vital an issue is at stake. "For an honest gaze the creation from which God is excluded can only be evil" he writes.⁵⁰ But whilst we have found an appreciation of how important the issue must be, what we have not found is a convincing attempt at its resolution. "Is there really any good reason", asks H. Paul Santmire, why we should not "explore the possibilities of a theology that deals substantively with the whole universe as God's good creation, and not just humanity alone? Is it legitimate for us any longer - exegetically, theologically, existentially - to think of nature merely as the scenery, merely

48. CD, III, 1, n. p. 336.

49. CD, III, 1, n. p. 339.

50. CD, III, 1, n. p. 340.

as some kind of adjunct for human history?"⁵¹

Word without World?

Barth concludes this section on 'Creation as Benefit' by insisting that theology "cannot itself become a world-view". If it seeks to do so "it abandons its special object, which is distinguished by the special character of divine creation from the object of every world-view". Thus losing contact with its special object theology would thus "transmute itself" into another philosophical scheme.⁵² There is obvious sense in this. By taking on board starting points other than theology, no matter how currently attractive or seemingly feasible, doctrine runs the risk of entering worlds to which it has no proper claim. But "world-view" in translation is a rendering of Weltanschauung and Weltbild. The first has all the philosophical overtones (of 'philosophy of life') which Barth rejects, but the second is a more neutral term best translated as "conception of the world" or "world picture" as Emil Brunner so defines. Because of this ambiguity, we can only ask whether Barth intends theology to develop a view of the world that is consonant with his Christocentric methodology. Could it be that he is misled by his own deeply held desire to separate theology from other secular disciplines to the extent that he overlooks the need to offer the fullest theological account of divine creation possible? Is not 'the world'

51. Santmire, 'Ecology and Ethical Ecumenics', Anglican Theological Review, 59, I (January 1977) pp. 101 - 102; his italics. This is a review article of Thomas Sieger Derr's Ecology and Human Liberation (Geneva: WSCF, 1973); USA ed: Ecology and Human Need (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), the result of work for the World Council of Churches on ecological problems. "Karl Barth thought of theology as 'the-anthropology', as a confession and exposition of God's special relationship with the human creature ... For better or worse ... that is the theological framework that has dominated theological reflection about humanity and nature in international ecumenical Protestantism ... providing the platform for the last three decades or more" (p. 98). Santmire may be a little optimistic about Barth's influence in the W.C.C., but it is certainly true that its work on Christ and creation has been minimal. For an account of Barth's involvement with the W.C.C. see Busch, op. cit., esp. pp. 395 - 400. For Santmire's full critique see The Travail of Nature: The Ambiguous Ecological Promise of Christian Theology (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985) esp. pp. 145-155 for a discussion of Barth.

52. CD, III, 1, p. 48.

about which secular theorists seek to theorise and speculate also 'the creation' about which Barth wishes to secure (from the self-disclosure of God) real and binding knowledge? The question is grasped by Brunner, "Does our faith in Jesus Christ as the decisive self-communication of God imply something also about the origin and destiny of the world?"⁵³

The second point concerning the sixth implication which Barth deduces is related. Dogmatics "pursues its own special task which is imposed upon it in the service of the Church's proclamation, and which consists in an increasingly unqualified and full apprehension, and faithful and exact reproduction, of the self-witness of the Creator in His revelation, and therefore of the biblical witness to creation". But what if this very proclamation, this very process of understanding, restatement and reproduction requires of dogmatics, in defence of the Gospel itself, the fullest statement of the meaning and purpose of the Kosmos? Barth firmly rejects the view that the creation sagas require any "material or direct help from any world-view, ancient, modern or future".⁵⁴ But could it be that world-views of human devising have something to learn from the doctrine of creation derived from the Logos? Torrance sees the "radical reversion" of priorities required within the Churches if this question is taken seriously. "It amounts", he writes, "to a demand that we set our sights again on the great intangible realities as the primary factors regulating the universe" and find in Jesus Christ "the real solution" to them. His challenge is quite explicit: "What is supremely needed, therefore, in all the Churches today, is a far profounder understanding of the Incarnation,

53. Brunner, Dogmatics, 4 Vols. (London: Lutterworth, 1952) Vol. III, The Christian Doctrine of the Church, the Faith and the Consummation, ET. by D. Cairns and T.H.L. Parker (1962), p. 425 and translation of world-view p. 432.

54. CD, III, 1, p. 344.

the coming of God himself into the structures of creaturely and human being, in order to restore the creation to its unity and harmony in itself - that is, a Christology with genuine substance in it once more, the theology of the incarnate Son of God, the one Lord Jesus Christ, 'being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made'".⁵⁵

A Non-Human Echo?

Barth's second sub-section is entitled 'Creation as Actualisation'. Why has God actualised and made real the non-human creation? Or more properly, how do we know on the basis of God's own self-disclosure that the creation is real and actualised by him? The question is not lost on Barth. He knows that the reality of the created order, affirmed by the incarnation, must issue in some significance for all created beings. "No creature is rooted in itself, or maintained by itself, but each is willed, posited, secured and preserved by God, and therefore each in its place and manner is genuine reality."⁵⁶ But the affirmation of existence, guaranteed and distinct as it is, cannot itself be sufficient. It is not the bare reality of creation but the order, structure and purpose within it that must be discerned if we are to give an adequate account of its divine actualisation. Barth appears to give an answer in the following way:

We emphasise that this awareness of creaturely existence rests wholly and exclusively upon God's self-communication in revelation. It is wholly and exclusively an echo and response of the creature to what is said to him by his Creator. It is neither a spontaneous nor a receptive accomplishment of the creature, for it does not rest upon any of his inherent faculties, nor is any of these faculties capable of this recognition. It merely takes place. It is a sheer fact that the creature whose faculties in themselves do not suffice to achieve this recognition, orientating himself according to God's self-revelation,

55. Torrance, Theology in Reconciliation: Essays towards Evangelical and Catholic Unity in East and West (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1975), p. 283; his italics.

56. CD, III, 1, p. 345.

is compelled to adopt this recognition. It is recognition in the form of acknowledgement; acknowledgement under the law of faith and obedience.⁵⁷

Is the non-human creation capable of an "echo" in the form of response, or, of recognition of the self-disclosure of the Creator? If we characterise the Logos, as C.K. Barrett also suggests, as God's "self-communication" with all beings he has made, it follows that "life and light" are the "primary forms in which this self-expression in creation becomes communicable" and thus divine communication to non-human spheres becomes a possibility too.⁵⁸ One continually puzzling feature with Barth's position, however, is the establishing of the reality of the entire creation wholly and completely within the divine-human encounter and this because God's Word can only "speak" in human language devised by self-conscious beings. Does he in this way define the relationship between God and the creature so that the existence of the non-human can only be seen as inappropriate or peripheral? If we are to take this particular writing as characterising Barth's considered position in this regard, we can only conclude that "the creature" (das Geschöpf) here spoken of can only be man himself, and that man's echo, and his God given capacity for response, is the sole means of creaturely awareness.⁵⁹

Descartes and Knowledge of the World

The ramifications of this may become clearer as we consider Barth's lengthy discussion of Descartes.⁶⁰ It is hardly surprising that the notion of

57. CD, III, 1, p. 349; my italics.

58. Barrett, 'The Prologue of St John's Gospel' in New Testament Essays (London: SPCK, 1972) p. 45.

59. But why should there not be a non-human creaturely "echo" to the Spirit of God immanent in creation? A recent attempt to show how nature can be seen as "responding" to the love of God is offered in W.H. Vanstone's Love's Endeavour Love's Expense: The Response of Being in the Love of God, foreword by H.A. Williams (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1977) esp. pp. 77 - 99.

60. Descartes, Meditationes de prima philosophia (1641), CD, III, 1, n. pp. 350 - 363.

the innateness of the idea of God within man should not pass without discussion. How can we move satisfactorily from clear and distinct ideas in our minds to external or divine realities? Despite its splendid concentration and admirable sophistication such a procedure cannot yield God, not even a clear justification for the existence of others beyond oneself. Barth sees in this process an inevitable appeal to the power of human transcendence: "By transcending myself, I never come upon an absolute being confronting and transcendent to me, but only again and again upon my own being. And by proving the existence of a being whom I have conjured up only by means of my own self-transcendence, I shall again and again succeed only in proving my own existence." It is not human demonstration, argues Barth, but "God's self-demonstration" that is valid as a basis for proof. God, as Descartes seeks to prove him, is "hopelessly enchained within the mind of man".⁶¹ Notwithstanding this compelling critique, it may be questioned again whether Barth himself is not open to the opposite charge. For is not God, as Barth practically describes him, so overridingly linked with man and, at least in part, so exclusively, that little of the world can actually be known? The same question may be asked of the otherwise perceptive comment that: "The knowledge of the reality of the created world, and therefore the legitimation of our consciousness of the ego and the world, depends essentially upon the knowledge of God ...".⁶² But what kind of knowledge is presupposed here? A knowledge of bare existence? Simply a knowing affirmation of external reality as opposed to dream or illusion? Simply a knowing affirmation of the beyond? Clearly not. What Barth wants to posit is a full and rich knowledge of the created world presupposed by the incarnation. But, once again, we look in vain to find in Part One a presentation of the knowledge which Barth

61. CD, III, 1, n. p. 360; his italics.

62. CD, III, 1, n. p. 361; my italics.

insists (rightly I judge) must follow from his theological starting point. Would not Barth's critique have especial force and consistency if at this juncture he could spell out the precise knowledge of the created world through the incarnation that so determinedly opposes itself to all attempts at human self-transcendence? I do not want to labour this point, so one further example will suffice. Barth rightly rejects the implied Cartesian view that nature itself can reveal what it is supposed to reveal, namely the objectivity of God:

Nature in itself and as such, the actual conjunction of our thinking with the other than ourselves which our senses suggest to us as similarly existent, is able to convey this truth to us only because it is created by God and because the God who is its Creator Himself bears witness to us that it is so. But the testimony of God on which everything depends must not itself be the testimony of our own mind, but the witness of God Himself to our minds, if it is to convey to us certainty regarding what is in itself the problematical teaching of nature.⁶³

But this is surely the point. If God the Creator reveals knowledge of the created world, then we need to know this knowledge before it can be opposed or contrasted with other forms of knowing. For in practice what fullness of knowledge does Barth propose to us concerning the designs and purposes of creation itself? The weakness of the argument here is not his positing of different kinds of knowledge, of one superior and the other inferior, or even of one true and the other false, but his practical reluctance to give us the barest outline of what knowledge there can be of God's purposes and designs for the created order. We must therefore risk one further question. Is not Barth's presentation of the purpose of the natural world in practice only slightly removed from Descartes's bare affirmation of its existence? Are not both in a practical sense similarly God-less, that is, do not both assume a realm and a sphere in which God's

63. CD, III, 1, n. p. 362; my italics.

mysterious activity, though linked with man, is fundamentally irrelevant or at least incidental? The question is important in more ways than one. Colin Gunton describes Barth's 'proof' from revelation as characterising "certain events as acts of God because they impose themselves as such upon the interpreter". A rational (but not rationalistic) 'proof' is possible because "certain events ... are correctly attributable to the agency of God and are such as to illumine consistently both human life and the world in which they happen".⁶⁴ But this is surely the rub. The less allowed for the illumination of the world by the insights of revelation, the weaker the rational 'proof' becomes.

The Ambiguity of Anthropocentricity

Barth's problem in this quarter is further exemplified by his subsequent attempt in this main section to underpin the specifically "Christian understanding of creation, the Creator, and the creature". The vital question is: who is "the creature"? Our problem will be discussed by reproducing Barth's substantive section here and indicating in italics the confusing range of options presented:

- 1 The God who posits and guarantees creaturely existence
- 2 (geschöpfliche Existenz), and by whose self-disclosure it is
- 3 revealed and secured to the creature (Geschöpf), is He who in and
- 4 through His creative activity has established His covenant with
- 5 the creature (Geschöpf).
- 6 As Creator He does not exist as a monad, but in the overflowing
- 7 plenitude of His life as Father, Son and Holy Ghost, in the
- 8 desire and love in which He does not will to keep His glory to
- 9 Himself but also to magnify it outside Himself, in which he does
- 10 not will only to live for Himself but also for another distinct
- 11 from Himself ... He lives as the God who so loved man (Mensch)⁶⁵
- 12 that he condescended to become man (Mensch) Himself in His only
- 13 begotten Son ... Hence His creation (Schöpfung) is not the mere
- 14 positing and guaranteeing, the mere actualisation of this other.

64. Gunton, Becoming and Being: The Doctrine of God in Charles Hartshorne and Karl Barth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978) p. 219; his italics.

65. den Menschen (object case) - to make things easier, all nouns have been cited in their basic (nominative) form.

15 It is no characterless creation⁶⁶ and event, but one that is
16 characterised as the affirmation, election and acceptance of the
17 creature (Geschöpf). It is the positing and guaranteeing of the
18 other (des Anderen) to whom God wills to manifest His glory to
19 confirm his good-pleasure and thus to bind and commit Himself.
20 Creation (Schöpfung) is a benefit because it establishes the
21 presupposition and the execution of this divine will and plan,
22 because it provides a sphere and object for the divine
23 affirmation, election and acceptance, for the divine goodness and
24 providence. Creation (Schöpfung) is a benefit inasmuch as it is
25 based upon and attains its end in the divine covenant with man
26 (Mensch). Thus even the creature (Geschöpf) does not merely
27 exist, but does so as the sphere and object of the covenant, as
28 the being (das Sein) to whom God has devoted His good-will and
29 whom He has destined to share in the overflowing of His own
30 fulness of life and love. To be a creature (geschöpf sein) means
31 to be determined to this end, to be affirmed, elected and
32 accepted by God. To be a creature (geschöpf sein) means to exist
33 after the manner of Israel; after the manner which God in His own
34 Son has not deemed it unworthy to adopt as His own. To be a
35 creature (geschöpft sein) means to be prepared for the place
36 where His honour dwells. The creature (Geschöpf) is a
37 beneficiary because his being does not arise without this
38 intention and end. And finally even the self-revelation of the
39 Creator to His creature (Geschöpf) is not the mere making known of
40 the fact that He, and therefore His creature (Geschöpf) is real
41 and that creation (Schöpfung) is actualisation. It is this too;
42 it includes it. But it is not only this. It embraces the Creator
43 not only as such but also as the sovereign Lord of the covenant
44 of His grace; creation (Schöpfung) not only as such but also
45 including the covenant which underlies it; and the creature
46 (Geschöpf) not only as such but including his determination as a
47 covenant-partner with God. It takes place in the course of the
48 history of the covenant. It is the impelling factor in this
49 history; the Word of God to His people, to Israel and the Church;
50 the Word of grace for lost and saved sinners spoken in the course
51 of God's dealings with men (Mensch). Its content is the Good News
52 that God in His Son is not against them but for them. Proclaiming
53 this to man (Mensch), it meets him in sheer confrontation, but it
54 also wins his heart and at the same time wins authority over him,
55 awakening him to faith and obedience, placing him in a position
56 of pure thankfulness, compelling him with a compulsion which
57 excludes all choices and gives him freedom for the only true
58 choice, viz, the acceptance of his own election. As the glad
59 tidings of Jesus Christ, God's self-disclosure is the work of the
60 Holy Spirit in which man (Mensch) is inwardly assured of the
61 grace of God and his own existence in grace, being both captured
62 and liberated in God.⁶⁷

66. The translation is very loose at this point. A literal translation would be: "It is no characterless activity and event, but one that is characterised as the affirmation, election and acceptance of the creature".

67. Die Kirchliche Dogmatik, II, 1, pp. 415/6; ET CD, III, 1, pp. 363/4.

The difficulty of giving an accurate, let alone adequate, interpretation of this section should now be evident. Who is "the creature"? (Lines 3, 5, 16/7, 26, 30, 31, 34/5, 36, 39, 40, 45.) Any object of creation? Living beings? Or only man? Geschöpf, it is important to remember, is an inclusive term for all living beings. Part of the answer may appear to be in the simple interchangeability of the words "man" and "creature". And it is certainly true that Barth's selected words yield a wide possibility of interpretation. Thus "the creature" (3 and 5) transmutes into "another distinct from Himself" (10/11) and to man (11). In short: the terms "creation", "the creature", "another", "man", "covenant partner" and "His creature" lack precision. The crucial question is how did he intend this section to be read, even allowing for a variety of interpretations at particular points? At first it seems clear that Geschöpf is the subject under review. Thus the opening lines speak generally of creation and only later of man. But as the exposition proceeds the range of possibilities is so defined as to bear a wholly anthropocentric reference, to the point where no other term is utilised (51 - 60). The intention then it seems, notwithstanding ambiguity, is to present a doctrine of man as Geschöpf.

The main deficiency of this Anthropozentrismus is that it is not Christologically qualified as Barth earlier insisted such talk should be. He does not speak "theanthropocentrically" as Brunner carefully cautions. "The goal of the whole vast universe", insists Brunner, "is not man, but humanity redeemed in the God-man Jesus".⁶⁸ Barth cannot therefore claim that "only from this standpoint ... (is) the Cartesian proof of existence left behind". He is unable to affirm that "only from this standpoint ... the Christian Church can and will

68. Brunner, Dogmatics, III, op. cit., p. 431. Because of this "the world is not a self-sufficient entity, nor is it merely an entity that is "there for me", but it exists through and "for" the Logos of the Creator and Redeemer God" (p. 431).

always offer such a proof".⁶⁹ For, unwittingly perhaps, he has only offered a proof of human creation and human incarnation; as far as the rest of the creation goes, there is no proof, nor can there be.

All this is all the more extraordinary because there are hints and guesses throughout the Dogmatics which suggest something different. In The Doctrine of the Word of God, for example, the interdependence of creation and reconciliation is stressed. Reconciliation presupposes creation; creation can only be understood in terms of its "realisation and fulfilment" in reconciliation. Thus the conclusion is emphatic: "dogmatics cannot be a system of atonement".⁷⁰ But if this is so, Barth has not supplied the necessary relationship whereby we can see the fundamental connection between the creative activity of God concerning the non-human and its corollary in the work of reconciliation. There is no connection here advanced. Is Barth therefore guilty of a form of "idealism" as Deegan suggests, which at least in relation to the non-human gives the impression of a docetic Christ? Does the Logos really impinge upon creaturely history, substance, creatureliness? Can God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be anything else in relation to all creation but Creator, Reconciler and Redeemer?

Anthropocentric or Christocentric Justification?

We now move to a decisive phase of the argument as Barth reaches his concluding sub-section: 'Creation As Justification'. Actualisation necessarily implies justification. "Its being is not neutral; is it not bad but good", writes Barth.⁷¹ Does this justification extend to the non-human? By implication, undoubtedly yes. But in what way?

69. CD, III, 1, p. 365.

70. CD, I, 2, The Doctrine of the Word of God, Prolegomena, Part Two, ET by G.T. Thompson and H. Knight (1956), p. 874; see also p. 877, Cf. Whitehouse: "The heart of the Lutheran objection to reformed theology comes out in this comment that Barth takes the significance of creation for redemption to be the essence of the work of creation", 'Karl Barth and the Doctrine of Creation' in op. cit., p. 14; his italics.

71. CD, III, 1, p. 366.

(i) "Of course, the Creator justifies the cosmos" writes Barth. "But he does so only because the latter is created according to His will and plan, and therefore with the purpose of instituting and fulfilling the covenant between the divine Creator and man ... The created world is, therefore, right as it is because it is an appropriate sphere and instrument of the divine activity."⁷² Creation it would appear is only justified in an indirect, operational sense. It is not because of what it is in itself, but because of what will be accomplished within it as the framework for fulfilment. First of all, it needs to be noted that Barth is only able to maintain this distinction because of his particular view of the covenant relationship. Animals are not covenant-partners and therefore do not belong to the circle of divine activity with "man at its heart".⁷³ But could there be an even stronger reason for questioning Barth's exposition here? The statement and answer to this riddle may lay in Barth's own concluding thought "... which has its beginning, centre and end (seinen Anfang, seine Mitte und sein Ziel) in Jesus Christ".⁷⁴ For his exegesis at this point is dependent to some degree upon a contrast between the work of creation and incarnation. Only marginally and indirectly are other living creatures seen as playing a part in the divine activity. But to maintain this emphasis strongly would involve questioning the work of Christ as Co-creator with the Father. For if (1) Christ "is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation", if (2) "in him all things were created through him and for him", if (3) "He is before all things, and in him all things hold together", and if (4) his purpose is "to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of the cross" (Col. 1: 15 - 21), then we cannot separate the purpose of

72. CD, III, 1, pp. 369/70; my italics.

73. CD, III, 1, p. 370.

74. CD, III, 1, pp. 369/70; my italics.

creation from the act of incarnation.⁷⁵ In short: the answer is this. There can be nothing at all in creation which has not come to be but through the deliberate design and purpose of God himself and that this purpose is that all things in creation partake of the divine work through the design to reconcile them.

(ii) "Because the divine self-disclosure has as its content the covenant of grace and therefore the work of the Son of God, it carries within itself the adequate and conclusive and incontestable answer to the question of the rightness of creaturely being as such ... What is creaturely exists in order to be serviceable to the glory of God in the work of His Son".⁷⁶ Barth here, I think, has the measure of the question. The nature of the question concerns God's glory; his justification of the creature's justification. But it is worth reminding ourselves that the glory of God as expressed, for example in Colossians, actually consists in the execution of his justification and reconciliation of all things. In this sense the word "serviceable" may be misleading. Non-human beings do not need to justify their existence before God by serving other beings within it

75. It is curious how Calvin overlooked the significance of this and other "cosmic" verses. Stress is laid on how Paul meant (in the above) "chiefly to refer to the angels" and how the Son of God "may preside over angels as well as men", but no reference is made to the non-human creation, The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians, eds. D.W. Torrance and T.F. Torrance, ET by T.H.L. Parker, Calvin's Commentaries (Edinburgh and London: Oliver & Boyd, 1965) pp. 309 and 310. Again on Eph. 1: 7 - 12, Calvin avoids the implication of restoration or recapitulation of all creation by stressing the notion of "order" and how all things outside Christ are reduced in this fashion, op. cit., p. 129. Exegesis of Philip. 2: 10 amounts to an attack on the "Papists" who "trifle childishly" by "infer(ring) purgatory" from the text (p. 252). Perhaps Barth follows in the footsteps of this inadvertence. Cf. Whitehouse: "The cosmic hopes expressed in Rom. 8: 21, in Ephesians 1: 10, in Colossians 1: 20 ... must be maintained in fidelity to God", 'New Heavens and a New Earth' in op. cit., p. 212. Of the many critical studies, see R.H. Fuller's summary in The Foundations of New Testament Christology, Fontana Library of Theology and Philosophy (London: Collins, 1969) esp. pp. 203 - 229.

76. CD, III, 1, p. 370; my italics.

precisely because they are not peripheral to the central reconciling purpose of Christ. The work of reconciliation cannot be earned, bought, rewarded or serviced in this sense. Once again this is not to deny that man is the central focus of this reconciliation, so uniquely accomplished within the inner life of God himself. But perhaps, and this may be the crucial point, it is the work of man thus reconciled by the "blood of the cross" to "serve" the divine purpose by recognising, celebrating and rejoicing (as only man can) in the divine work of reconciliation in other parts of creation. "Christian hope is sustained by, and expresses itself in, a reverent grateful love for the good earth" emphasises Daniel Day Williams. Because divine creation is dynamic rather than static, our concern flows from the conviction of the continuing re-creative energy of God, that "what God has provided shall be used to serve nothing less than His good which is the one real good of all things".⁷⁷ Barth appears to recognise this in the following way: "It is our duty - and this is what we are taught by the self-revelation of God in Jesus Christ - to love and praise the created order because, as it is manifest in Jesus Christ, it is so mysteriously well-pleasing to God". Once again, if this is the real point of knowledge in this matter, that is, our understanding of Jesus Christ is central in grasping our true relation to the rest of creation, then we can only point out that it is in the life, suffering and death of him, that we can perceive the moral content of "service" to the divine purpose of reconciliation.

(iii) "God created man to lift him in His own Son into fellowship with himself. This is the positive meaning of human existence and all existence."

77. Daniel Day Williams, God's Grace and Man's Hope (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), pp. 163 and 166; his italics. Cf. Torrance: "It follows ineluctably that the Church, which is the Body of Christ in the world, is committed to its union with him, to the mission of healing and reconciliation in the depth of being", Theology in Reconciliation, op. cit., pp. 282/3.

But this elevation presupposes a wretchedness of human and all existence which His own Son will share and bear. This is the negative meaning of creation. Since everything is created for Jesus Christ and His death and resurrection, from the very outset everything must stand under this two-fold and contradictory determination".⁷⁸ The telling thing to notice here is the strident way in which the non-human creation is seen as sharing these twin determinations. But apart from an acceptance of the "intrinsic value" of creation,⁷⁹ the force of this section concentrates wholly upon the work of God for the liberation and salvation of man.

But what of the sorrow and joy in the non-human creation? For what purpose do other living beings sharing this double determination exist and live? For what purpose do animals share with man both the "blessing" and "curse" of the Lord to which Barth earlier referred us? For what purpose does the inner circle of creation made by God on the sixth day share the complex intimacy of man? What purpose is there in the animal company sharing the "weal and woe" of the human situation? What is the purpose of animal kind so disclosed that whilst it "prefigures and to that extent partakes of the covenant" it does not enter into any of the liberation of creation as promised to man? What is most striking in Barth's discussion here is not the absence of a particularly novel way of answering these questions, but the absence of these questions themselves. Is not the sorrow and joy of the animal world likewise to be referred to Christ as the firm ground of theological knowledge and explanation? "It must never be forgotten", writes Austin Farrer, "that God is the God of hawks no less than of sparrows, of microbes no less than of men".⁸⁰ Barth can have no good

78. CD, III, i, p. 376; my italics.

79. CD, III, i, p. 372.

80. Farrer, Love Almighty and Ills Unlimited, Fontana Library of Theology and Philosophy (London: Collins, 1966) pp. 104/5.

theological ground (as he has expounded it) for the loss of Christological nerve at this point. Could it be that he dimly saw that his final emphasis upon man as the sole covenant-partner would be weakened if he had to include non-human creatures in a more direct way? Could it be that when Barth writes that "the truth about our existence in its confrontation by God's self-revelation is that we are those who have been loved and sought and found by Him, won for Him and called to faith in Him - nothing else and nothing more",⁸¹ he is conscious that there might in fact be something more and something less. Is not the force of St. John's Gospel (3: 16) on which his Christological emphasis is so dependent that God "so loved the world" as well as the human-kind within it?⁸²

Creation as Man's Pleasure Garden

This concluding section finishes with a long and compelling note on "a philosophical counterpart" to justification, namely philosophical Optimism. Barth's judgement is not unreservedly negative. It is worth capturing the generous nature of his response: "in all its forms it (i.e. Optimism) approximates closely to the doctrine of creation as justification". Moreover, "We, too, have had to state clearly the principle that the nature as well as the existence of the created world is affirmed by God its Creator, so that to this extent it is justified and perfect ... Hence we, too, have espoused a definite optimism, and we cannot be ashamed of the company in which we find ourselves".⁸³ And what is this Optimism that so closely approximates itself to the Christian Gospel? Barth takes the thought of Leibniz as primary. The world must, if created by God, be the very best world possible. "If it had been possible for a better world than this to exist, God's wisdom must have recognised it, His goodness

81. CD, III, 1, p. 387; my italics.

82. "We must remember that cosmos in John means mankind or human nature primarily and not the material world", T.W. Manson, On Paul and John: Some Selected Theological Themes, Studies in Biblical Theology, 8 (London: SCM Press, 1967) p. 153. Primarily man is the central focus, but not exclusively.

83. CD, III, 1, n. p. 404.

willed it and His omnipotence created it".⁸⁴ And what of the existence of evil? The answer is broadly three fold:

- (i) metaphysical evil needs to be distinguished from created evil;
- (ii) the character of evil is privative rather than positive, and
- (iii) the existence of evil necessarily contributes to the growth and development of the good.

This third point is taken up by Leibniz' younger contemporary, Christian Wolff of Halle, who defines perfection as "the coherence of the manifold".⁸⁵ Thus by observation and analysis of nature it is possible to know both the mind of the Creator and the divine pattern which works inexorably for good, or at least the very best. This, Barth perceives, is developed to its logical conclusion in Freidrich Christian Lesser's Insecto-Theologia which maintained that "The great God has placed before reasonable men for their intelligent consideration of all kinds of creatures including the insects as a mirror and testimony of His infinite power and wisdom".⁸⁶ Lesser's brief is to demonstrate the utility of every living insect. Thus, for example, silkworms provide clothing; some are useful for baits for fishermen and huntsmen; locusts, flies and gnats are instruments of divine judgement; bees give us honey; and many have medicinal properties for man. During the Peasants' War of 1525 a story is told of a pastor who in order to avert danger threw beehives into a crowd, and so, the argument runs, who can decry the value of bees? "There are no useless insects, but only those whose utility is not yet known to us and have still to be discovered".⁸⁷ This view is fully exemplified by B.H. Brockes, a Hamburg Senator, whose verse so confidently

84. CD, III, 1, n. p. 389.

85. Wolff, Vernünfftige Gedancken von Gott, der Welt und der Seele des menschen, auch allen Dingen überhaupt, den Liebhabern der Wahrheit mitgeteilt (1719) cited CD, III, 1, n. p. 393.

86. Lesser, Insecto-Theologia (2nd Ed., 1740, p. 3) cited CD, III, 1, n.p. 396.

87. CD, III, 1, n. p. 398.

strove to illuminate the wisdom of the Creator that it was set subsequently to music by the Zurich theologian, J.K. Bachofen. Two small extracts will be sufficient to grasp the genre of this writing. The first is part of a reflection upon a grazing herd of kine:

Sweet kine, standing here
I see thee milked
And I wonder how it is possible
That in thy body thus marvellously
Grass becomes meat and drink for me
And as in living kilns distils itself.
Speak now, O man! and say
Is it not meet to give eternal praise
To Him who made it thus?

The other extols the virtues of creation happily made for man's use:

To hunt and fish and shoot
Are pleasures innocent
To him who thinks anent:
These pleasures are God-given
And God is well content
If only we have striven
Gladly to honour Him
And bless Him with heart and soul ...
Hills, valleys, meadows, woods,
Ploughland and plain,
To us are pleasant goods ... 88

Is Barth right in supposing that these pictures in their aim of justifying creation "approximate closely" to his own doctrine? Of course he is not uncritical. He cannot confirm their "abstract this-worldliness and anthropocentricity, descending at its lowest to gastrocentricity".⁸⁹ But Barth's general generosity of reception may give rise to some unease. His view that in the light of Lesser's insect theology "the existence of insects is fully and precisely justified" begs the fundamental question.⁹⁰ For if we speak at this point of divine justification, then questions of

88. Brockes, Irdisches Vergnügen in Gott, bestehend in physikalisch- und moralischen Gedichten (1721) cited CD, III, 1, n. pp. 400 and 402; my italics.

89. CD, III, 1, n. p. 408.

90. CD, III, 1, n. p. 399.

human utility can only be raised in a wholly secondary and subsequent manner, if at all. For the whole tenor of Barth's method has been to place in juxtaposition human opinion and divine revelation, and thus rule out the possibility of theological judgement from unaided human observation. "What we consider to be the truth about the created world is one thing. Quite another is the covenant of grace, the work of Jesus Christ, for the sake and in fulfilment of which creation exists as it is."⁹¹ Now if this is true, postulating from the point of view of human utility cannot be given even limited credibility. It is ruled out because the measure of the goodness of creation exists independently of human observation (however sympathetic or critical). This is not to deny, of course, the appropriate response of gratitude, praise and genuine thanks-giving for the mystery of the created world and the ways in which it can be useful to human-kind. But no theory or philosophy which claims to stand at this point on human judgement can even "approximate" the doctrine of divine justification. Man cannot claim to be the total measure of good as regards all his fellow creatures. He may claim of course that they are no good to him. But he may not posit that his good is always identical with God's good. Creation "exists for God's glory", argues a recent Report, "it has a meaning and worth beyond its meaning and worth as seen from the point of view of human utility ... To imagine that God has created the whole universe solely for man's use and pleasure is a mark of folly".⁹²

91. CD, III, 1, p. 370; his italics. -

92. Man and Nature ed. by Hugh Montefiore (London: Collins, 1975) p. 67 The Report is the result of a working party set up by the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1971 to "investigate the relevance of Christian doctrine to the problems of man in his environment" (preface). Cf. John Burnaby: "The difficulties raised for our belief in a good Creator by the evils of the world are unnecessarily exaggerated by certain assumptions ... With our immensely wider horizons, we can easily read the story (of creation) as though the whole structure of the universe had no other purpose but the production of the human species and that all things in it had been made for the use of man. And we may slip from there into the further assumption that the "use" of man can only mean his happiness or even his material comfort", The Belief of Christendom: A Commentary on the Nicene Creed (London: SPCK, 1963) p. 40.

Earlier Barth spoke of the seeming necessity of maintaining a similar view asking "Who is able to do justice to its (creation's) intrinsic value in quality only (to say nothing of the quantitative wealth all around us) and to be genuinely and correspondingly joyful and thankful?" and again: "What would be our position if the revelation of the grace of God were tied to this witness of the created world, and we were dependent on our wretched understanding of this witness?"⁹³ The disappointing feature of Barth's treatment is that he appears not to have responded to his own poignant questions.

The second issue relates to Barth's fourfold rejection of Optimism and returns to my developing question concerning the adequacy of his own approach. The first rejection of Optimism concerns the way in which it "does not so much eliminate as assimilate" the negative aspects of creation by its limitation of evil, and thus transform it into "a kind of margin to the sphere of light".⁹⁴ Barth speaks of people "in a glass case" who are able to perceive the world but who are precluded from being able to be moved or touched by it". Thus Optimism has no "true and urgent and inescapable awareness of the imperilling" of the creature.⁹⁵ This is finely put. But has Barth a sufficient sense of the negative dimension within all creation, human and non-human? Where does he speak of pain and suffering of the animal world in such a way as to bring it into consciousness even as a problem? Where is his theological cognisance of the peril, pain and death of the non-human creation? If Optimism, through ideological default, misses the pain of creation, where does Barth show an awareness of the full range of the travail and woe in the non-human creation? If adequacy of explanation is to be the criterion here, then it cuts both

93. CD, III, 1, p. 372.

94. CD, III, 1, n. p. 406.

95. CD, III, 1, n. p. 407.

ways. The problem is crisply stated by C.S. Lewis: "So far as we know beasts are incapable either of sin or virtue: therefore they can neither deserve pain nor be improved by it".⁹⁶

The third point concerns the failure of Optimism to speak sufficiently of the positive aspect of the world. Barth writes: "It stands or falls objectively with the existence of the creaturely world as such and subjectively with the human capacity to see its actual character in the best light" and again: "There is no escaping a question which cannot be answered within this circle of ideas - the question of the goodness of the good, of the ultimate meaning and purpose of this harmony or mechanism or useful apparatus".⁹⁷ Barth is right here, I judge, in indicating how without some objective goal for creation, all within it may be reduced to the level of subjectively defined, and often transient, human utility. But for all its deficiencies and defects, did not Optimism have a clear sense of creation justified as a whole, as one complete interlocking mechanism including man, which is pressingly absent in much of his own treatment? At least in this philosophy our eyes are turned outwards to the natural world to see, enquire and examine within it what in its own terms may be said of it, and this needs to be said no matter how bizarre and gastro-centric the results.

The same question may be raised concerning Barth's third point, namely that its utilisation of the idea of God is vacuous and based entirely upon "human self-confidence".⁹⁸ In utter contrast to this "It is on the basis of His (God's) revealed decision that in Christian faith 'Yes' is said to the world ...". But it could be that Optimism has grasped something which

96. Lewis, The Problem of Pain, Fontana ed. (London: Collins, 1967) p. 117. For Barth's discussion of Rom. 8 see pp. 174-177; 275-6.

97. CD, III, 1, n. p. 400.

98. CD, III, 1, n. p. 410.

even Barth neglects. Even if Optimism only stands under the name of an unknown God, at least some of its adherents see a link between man and creation, even if this is achieved at the cost of a weaker link between God and man. This is related in turn to Barth's fourth concern that in rejecting Christian revelation "they (i.e. the Optimists) only had an optional use for this God". "They are like oriental despots in relation to their subjects, they have no personal interest in things."⁹⁹ Such a charge can only be sustained if it can be shown that Christian revelation provides an adequate and sufficient understanding of the reality of human and non-human creation; of its purpose and meaning and of its ultimate end. It would be too easy, of course, to counter-charge that like his oriental philosophers, Barth fails to have a personal interest in creation beyond its human creatures. It must be said that Barth has not provided a sufficiently sure ground on which he can strike so easily against his opponents. For where in his approach is the compelling need to address the problem of creation in itself and as such? Writing disparagingly of the Optimists, he states that "they sit at their telescope or in their cosy studies or on the turf among the cows, observing and then reflecting on what they have seen. They do not allow themselves to be personally affected, for all their interest in these things." Thus they only learn from the "book of nature".¹⁰⁰ But it obviously does not occur to Barth that this option may present itself as a philosophical and theological possibility precisely because no serious reason has been advanced for the relationship between the world as we see it, and the world in which the Word reveals itself. It could be that the point at which Optimistic theory most approximates the justification of creation is not at the stage at which both may appear to advance its relationship and utility to man,

99. CD, III, 1, n. p. 411.

100. CD, III, 1, n. p. 414.

but rather at the point where both accept that creation is in itself intelligible and purposeful by virtue of its creation. In this sense Torrance is undoubtedly right that Christian faith has enabled "the development of empirical science" or at least nurtured the soil which made scientific exploration possible.¹⁰¹

Assessment

Now that we have completed our survey of Barth's Part One, we may begin a deeper discussion of the questions set out at the opening of our inquiry:

What account does Barth give of the creation of the non-human?
How does non-human creation stand in relation to human creature?
What end and purpose does non-human creation have? and
What, if any, is its theological significance within the created order?

I shall divide our discussion into three parts:-

- (1) presuppositions,
- (2) methods, and
- (3) results.

101. Torrance, Theological Science, op. cit., p. 67. Where Torrance is wrong, however, is in his uncritical assessment of scientific methods in exploring creation. His adulation for Francis Bacon who pursued scientific work "in obedience and gratitude to God" and who puts "the question to nature" even in a "violent form" is unfortunate. Theology in Reconstruction (London: SCM Press, 1965) pp. 274 and 275. "The underlying idea - that in science we may use animals without any external constraints - is written into the constitution of modern science. Bacon is, so to speak, one of the authors of this constitution", Brian Klug, 'Laboratory Animals, Francis Bacon and the Culture of Science', Listening, 18, 1, (Winter 1983) p. 113. A scientific conquest of nature without a sufficient sense of grace and reverence will always turn against us. To be fair, Torrance appears to recognise this when he utilises the term, borrowed from Richard Schlegel, 'malevolent technology'. "Here we have the creation of mechanisms in which man embodies his own devices, but which have a sinister habit of gaining momentum of their own and exercising a demonic-like power over man himself ..." Divine and Contingent Order (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1981) p. 131.

(1) Presuppositions

The question of presuppositions ask, 'What can and should be presupposed in theological enquiry?' Barth's answer all but determines his method and results. This is not to suggest that his particular starting points are arbitrary or ill-considered. On the contrary, it is clear throughout that the business of presuppositions, of knowing where to begin and where to distinguish theological knowledge from human opinion, is a matter of the utmost seriousness. Indeed, we see from the Preface that Barth would have happily preferred to give over this work to others if only he could have been convinced of different starting points. There is a sense of reluctance and weariness with which he approaches the necessity of beginning differently. "The theological principle (theologischer Ansatz) which I accept without a rival", he writes, "has made it almost compulsory that I should present the doctrine ... in the old-fashioned form of a radical exposition of the contents of the first two chapters of the Bible".¹⁰² It will be seen that this Ansatz determines all. This does not mean, however, that all subsequent questions about methodology, analysis and result are simply questions of embellishment and detail. What Barth seeks first and foremost is a starting point that will make sense of the material under consideration. "The theology of Barth lacks nothing - except a basis" - this and many other "one-sentence dismissals" of his work

102. CD, III, 1, p. iv (preface).

abound.¹⁰³ Arguably, however, no other theologian this century has actually spent more time justifying and explaining his theological approach. What is exceptional about Barth is not that he has presuppositions, since all theological work involves these, but the rigour, dexterity and determination with which he pursues the theological task certain that there is understanding to be gained and knowledge to be acquired. We may wish that other theologians had subjected their own presuppositions to the rigorous examination that Barth had subjected his own.¹⁰⁴ Our primary concern in what immediately

103. This particular one is S.W. Sykes' "favourite", see his Karl Barth - Studies of his Theological Methods, op. cit., p. 3. Here are some others: (i) "Barth, then, is to be read (some of him, at least), but not to be imitated", Maurice Wiles, The Remaking of Christian Doctrine (London: SCM Press, 1974) p. 25; (ii) "... Barth's influence has tended to encapsulate Christian thinking within the Church, and to sever its connection with the secular world", John Macquarrie, Twentieth Century Religious Thought: The Frontiers of Philosophy and Theology, 1900-1980, Revised ed. (London: SCM Press, 1981) p. 324; (iii) "Theologies, such as that of Barth, which threaten to destroy all relative moral judgments by their exclusive emphasis upon the ultimate religious fact of the sinfulness of all men, are rightly suspected of imperilling relative moral achievements of history", Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation, 2 vols. (London: Nisbet & Sons, 1941) Vol. I, Human Nature (1941) p. 234. Niebuhr's judgement, especially his view that in "radical Protestantism", characterised by Barth, "the very image of God in man is believed to be destroyed", op. cit., p. 285, flies in the face of substantial evidence, see my summary pp.27-28. Perhaps it is not surprising that Barth asked himself in later life whether "people only pay me attention out of respect, without really listening?", letter to H. Gollwitzer, 31 July, 1962, cited in Busch, op. cit., p. 461.

104. For example: (i) "God is a unifying symbol that eloquently personifies and represents to us everything that spirituality requires of us", Don Cupitt, Taking Leave of God (London: SCM Press, 1980) p. 9; (ii) "For to say, without explanation, that the historical Jesus of Nazareth was also God is as devoid of meaning as to say that this circle drawn with a pencil on paper is also a square", John Hick, 'Jesus and the World Religions' in The Myth of God Incarnate, ed. by John Hick (London: SCM Press, 1977) p. 178; (iii) "The second consideration that has made the traditional account of the doctrine of the incarnation incredible for me has been the growing conviction that in our account of Jesus Christ we must begin from the assumption that, whatever else he was, he was a real human personality", A.T. Hanson, Grace and Truth: A Study in the Doctrine of the Incarnation (London: SPCK, 1975) p. 2; (iv) "... I do not believe that it is possible for us to claim that kind of precise knowledge (however mysterious) about the nature of God in himself ... I cannot with integrity say that I believe God to be one in three persons", Maurice Wiles, Christian Believing: The Nature of the Christian Faith and its Expression in Holy Scripture and Creeds, Report of the Doctrine Commission of the Church of England (London: SPCK, 1976) p. 126; cf. "We have no other starting point (for theological knowledge) than our ordinary
(cont. over)

follows, therefore, is not to quarrel with Barth's Ansatz, that is to posit or justify alternative theological principles which might have illuminated the doctrine of creation in a different way, but rather to ask whether Barth secures the ends he seeks, given his starting points. In short: this is not primarily a comparative exercise nor a contrasting one; but primarily an analytical one. We want to know whether beginning at the point at which Barth begins we can really construct an adequate doctrine of creation as such.

What then is this Ansatz that Barth accepts "without a rival"? It is the presupposition of God's self-disclosure in Jesus Christ. This principle is normative (in the sense that it provides the basis of enquiry); regulative (in the sense that it shapes the nature of that enquiry), and determinative (in the sense that the end or result of that enquiry is related to its beginning). Barth makes this clear in his outline summary:

The insight (Einsicht) that man owes his existence (Dasein) and form (Sosein), together with all the reality distinct from God, to God's creation, is achieved only in the reception and answer of the divine self-witness, that is, only in faith in Jesus Christ, i.e. in the knowledge of the unity of Creator and creature actualised in Him, and in the life in the presence mediated by Him, under the right and the experience of the goodness of the Creator towards His creature.¹⁰⁵

We may sum up the ways in which the Ansatz operates by itemising the ways in which Christ relates to the creature, thus: (i) notionally the self-

104. (cont.) experience of the world", The Remaking of Christian Doctrine, op. cit., p. 25. These "starting points" or "assumptions" effectively govern what can subsequently be concluded, e.g. is it self-evident that the question about the resurrection of the body should be posed in this form "... are there features of the human situation as such which point towards a belief in immortality for man?" Wiles, The Remaking of Christian Doctrine, op. cit., p. 132. At least we can say that Barth's assumptions do not suffer from any lack of explicitness or elaboration.

105. CD, III, 1, p. 3; for a discussion of the meaning of Einsicht see Whitehouse, 'Karl Barth and the Doctrine of Creation' in op. cit., pp. 12 - 14.

disclosure of God establishes the reality of the creature because God has affirmed the reality of created life in himself in this way; (ii) ontologically the basis of creation is affirmed in Christ, since it is the Son who is the agent of creation, the Co-creator with the Father, who sustains, upholds and rules creation; (iii) Christ is the centre, purpose and goal of creation; it is made for him who is necessarily its "basis, norm and meaning"¹⁰⁶; (iv) the shape and nature of creation, including the right and appropriate response of man, is determined by the way in which God has chosen to reveal himself within creation; (iv) the incarnate humanity of Jesus is thus the meaning of creation and, in this sense, "man is and represents the secret of the creature";¹⁰⁷ (vi) the covenant relationship with man, as described and detailed by Barth, "has its beginning, its centre and its culmination in Jesus Christ"¹⁰⁸ because this relationship is the prototype of, and a prefiguring of, the inner relationship between God in himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit; (vii) Christ is the "guarantee" that creation is not indifferent, hostile or ambivalent but real (actual), good and beneficent because God has joined himself to it through the incarnation; and (viii) Christ is the sign of the unity of creation, because God has reconciled creation, its brighter and negative aspects, to himself through the work of the Son.

(2) Methods

How then, given these presupposed relationships, does Barth advance a doctrine of creation? As we have seen, his primary data are the two creation sagas. His concern is to show how these sagas are to be read in the light of Jesus Christ. "I have no christological principle and no

106. CD, III, 1, p. 25.

107. CD, III, 1, p. 18.

108. CD, III, 1, p. 42.

christological method" wrote Barth provocatively in 1952. "Rather, in each individual theological question I seek to orientate myself afresh - to some extent from the very beginning - not on christological dogma but on Jesus Christ himself."¹⁰⁹ The point is not to show from the material how or why it is true that God has so disclosed himself in Jesus Christ, but rather how it is that the confession of God the Creator is inseparable from the confession of Jesus Christ, crucified and risen. Barth does this by establishing the Genesis narratives as "witnesses" to the divine self-witness, i.e. Jesus Christ, and therefore feels free to offer explicitly Christological interpretations of the Genesis material.¹¹⁰ The second way

109. Letter to B. Gherardini, 24 May 1952, cited in Busch, op. cit., p. 380. Cf. "Sometimes I don't like the word christology very much. It's not a matter of christology, nor even of christocentricity and a christological orientation, but of Christ himself", conversations with Göttingen students, 12 October 1963, cited in Busch, op. cit., p. 411, his italics.

110. It is vexing to recount the number of commentators who fail to see Barth's distinction between the Revealed Word (Christ himself) and witnesses to that Word in scripture and preaching, see my note, 30, p. 12. For example: (i) "For him (Barth) the Bible was a given; the limits of the canon were ultimate limits to the vehicle of divine revelation", John Bowden, Karl Barth: Theologian (London: SCM Press, 1983) p. 98; his italics. But the Bible is not in itself the vehicle of revelation; it only becomes so when it witnesses to the Revealed Word; (ii) "For Barth's word of God - the church's preaching? scripture? Jesus himself? - demanding the obedience of faith cannot be unambiguous because it remains at least problematical whether it is God and divine revelation and not merely human convictions", Wolfhart Pannenberg, Theology and the Philosophy of Science, ET by Francis McDonagh (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1976) p. 273; his italics. Pannenberg's criticism might be just if Barth had not in fact taken pains to distinguish precisely the meaning he attributes to "revealed", "written" and "preached" Words; (iii) "According to Karl Barth, dogma is the agreement of the preaching of the Church at a particular time with the revelation testified to in scripture - that is, the preaching of the Church insofar as it agrees with the Bible as the word of God", Michael Schmaus, Dogma, 6 vols. (London: Sheed and Ward, 1968) Vol I God in Revelation (1968) pp. 229/30. Again this appears to take the word in the Bible as the primary source of revelation. Barth does not deny that Bible and preaching are "primary witnesses", even that they hold a "unique position" to the Revealed Word, but the crux is that God can only reveal himself and thus "Theology is modest because its entire logic can only be human ana-logy to that Word (Revealed Word)", Barth, Evangelical Theology: An Introduction, ET by Grover Foley, Fontana Library of Theology and Philosophy (London: Collins, 1965) pp. 29 and 21; his italics.

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clear.

is by the insistence that the creation sagas seek to relate not only history, but also the history of the covenant between God and man. Thus the covenant becomes the major interpretive theme for understanding the Genesis sagas.

(i) Saga One (Gen 1: 1 - 2.4a) which describes the making of the heavens and the earth is interpreted as "the external basis of the covenant". Barth does not content himself with exegesis of this narrative but seeks to find the right point from which intelligible exegesis can emerge. It is not the brute fact of existence, but the divine purpose willing and supporting creation which is central. Thus "Creation is not itself the covenant".¹¹¹ Again: "Love, divine love, wills something with and for that which it loves", and therefore creation points beyond to "an exercise and fulfilment of His love ... to which creation in all its glory looks and moves, and of which creation is the presupposition".¹¹² Thus Barth's exposition of Genesis sees creation as moving towards a climax and goal, of which the fact of creation is only the presupposition. Its first stage is the creation of man which unlike the rest of creation, is "the true occupant of the house founded and prepared by God".¹¹³ Man is to be God's covenant partner. Again Barth could not be more emphatic: "Everything (the non-human creation) that precedes only pre-figures this decision (the election of man as a covenant partner) and prepares for it".¹¹⁴ Man, as made male and female, reflects and copies the eternal "I" and "Thou" relationship within God himself. The second and more decisive stage is the resting on the Sabbath. This is the "goal" of creation standing as it were inside and outside of time. "Man is created to participate in this

111. CD, III, 1, p. 97.

112. CD, III, 1, pp. 95/6.

113. CD, III, 1, p. 181.

114. CD, III, 1, p. 182.

rest" writes Barth. "It is the covenant of the grace of God which in this event, at the supreme and final point of the first creation story, is revealed as the starting point for all that follows."¹¹⁵ In sum: the first saga is interpreted with these three emphases, (i) the creation of man as the true covenant partner; (ii) man, as male and female, reflecting the inner relationship within God himself and, most importantly (iii) the goal of creation as Sabbath rest, freedom and joy for men.

(ii) Saga Two (Gen 2: 4b-3) is described as the "internal basis of creation". Because this saga begins with the goal of creation already established we are dealing with a history of creation from "the inside". In this saga we see how Jesus Christ is the "beginning (the beginning because he is the goal) of creation".¹¹⁶ Barth therefore accepts that "it would be quite out of place ... to apply the method used in relation to Gen. 1, selecting a certain point in the passage and using it as a criterion for the rest".¹¹⁷ The first man created and described at the beginning of Saga Two is the man necessary for the flourishing and tilling of the earth. Barth gives us an explicit Christological interpretation: "He, Jesus Christ, is the man whose existence was necessary for the perfecting of the earth". Once grasped it is perceived that we are on the "threshold" of the history of the covenant.¹¹⁸ The second fundamental emphasis concerns the creation of woman, and man's recognition and acceptance of her as part of himself. Again this receives an explicitly Christological interpretation. "The whole inner basis of creation", writes Barth, "God's whole covenant with man, which will later be established, realised and fulfilled historically, is prefigured in this event, in the completing of man's emergence by the

115. CD, III, 1, p. 98.

116. CD, III, 1, p. 232.

117. CD, III, 1, p. 233.

118. CD, III, 1, p. 239.

coming of woman to man".¹¹⁹ The male/female analogy is seen as a pre-figuring of the relationship between man and woman in general, between Yahweh and his people, and more specifically and finally between Christ and his Church. Jesus Christ and his Church are the inner basis of creation.

How then are we to characterise Barth's method of approaching the creation sagas? First and foremost, he is concerned to establish analogies of relationship within the earthly sphere that reflect the inner relationship within the life of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. If Barth is free with his Christological interpretations it is because he is convinced that there must be a fundamental relationship between the Word and the created order made by God in which the Word becomes enfleshed. "(I)t is through radically Christo-centric thinking that pure theology can arise", argues Torrance, "and be preserved from all corruption from the side of anthropocentric thinking".¹²⁰ This analogy of relationship is most clearly exemplified in the covenant relationship itself. It is not in any faculty, ability, disposition or potentiality on man's part that the covenant is established but through God's wholly sovereign will and design. Man finds himself as a covenant partner, in the same way for example, that woman finds herself as the chosen partner of man. "She does not choose; she is chosen" writes Barth.¹²¹ This exegesis of this apparently small incident can be seen as wholly illustrative of Barth's theme, namely the sovereign free

119. CD, III, 1, p. 295.

120. Torrance, Karl Barth: An Introduction to his Early Theology, 1910 - 1931, op. cit., p. 143; his italics. It may be ironical that the strongest claim made here for Barth consists in his freeing of theology from anthropocentricity. It may be difficult in practice to know the difference between a theology of the Word which confines itself to knowledge of the human creature and "an anthropology that tries to solve the riddle of human existence through man's self-understanding", Torrance, Karl Barth: An Introduction, op. cit., p. 166.

121. CD, III, 1, p. 303.

choice of God to elect man within his very self. In the second place, his method is designed to promote understanding of what must be true about the nature of the world as described by Genesis, if it is also true that God has disclosed himself in Jesus Christ. It is the making sense of creation that follows the affirmation of the incarnation. Thus Barth returns again and again to his theological starting point, not through any disguised attempt at dogmatism, but in order to show how, even in small and apparently trivial matters, creaturely life is significant and purposeful. Created life in the light of the incarnation must be intelligible, that is, it cannot be neutral, hostile or indifferent. The determination to juxtapose human opinion and revealed knowledge stems from the conviction that the key to understanding cannot be found in simple human reasoning; it requires a response of faith and a readiness to stand by the fully rational insights that flow from it.¹²² Thirdly, it is the notion of insight, of something seen, of relationships perceived, of grace experienced, that so characterises Barth's approach to the biblical material. It is not incidental that he makes free with words like "witness", "perception", "prefigures", "imagination" and "discovery". The business of biblical exegesis is a dynamic process of relating one expression of truth to another and seeking their inner correspondence. Those who question Barth's approach purely from the standpoint of historical correctness or redaction criticism often miss this point. But it has to be said that the typological method which so characterises his approach has few theological friends today. But since it was an influential form of exegesis in the early church, it requires more attention than it currently receives. "If the Bible is a unity in any sense, then it is plain that it must, in some

122. For a critical defence of Barth against neo-classical theology represented by Charles Hartshorne, see C.E. Gunton's Becoming and Being, op. cit., esp. pp. 215 - 224. Gunton stresses: "We are very much in the area of pre-rational views of the way things are, of which systems of theology and metaphysics are the outworking in rational terms. It is almost certainly true that men do not choose their view of the way things are; in large part, it chooses them", p. 219.

sense, be a book about Christ; and typology is simply a method of discovering and interpreting the implications of that fact".¹²³ This is why Barth feels free to postulate what to others appear extravagant or fanciful correspondences and relationships - precisely because the inner unity of the biblical witness betokens the rationality of the Word made flesh. It is because of this that the creative on-going work of dogmatics must involve the postulating of fresh correspondences and relationships and why Barth was so eager during his lifetime that his work should inspire others to pursue the same creative work that every generation is called upon to perform. "I see ... the Church Dogmatics", commented Barth towards the end of his life, "not as a conclusion but as the opening of a new conversation". Dogmatics should not be likened to "a house" but "as the introduction to a way that must be followed, as the description of the movement of something that can only be described in dynamic, not static concepts. A house is a static object".¹²⁴

(3) Results

The questions we must ask of Barth then are broadly these: Has he established genuine points of relationship and correspondence between the created world and the Word made flesh? Has he shown the intelligibility of the created world in the light of his presuppositions and methods? Does his exposition make sense of the created world? Does the doctrine of creation as presented rationally cohere with and correspond to other

123. G.W.H. Lampe, 'The Reasonableness of Typology' in Essays on Typology, eds. G.W.H. Lampe and K.J. Woollcombe, Studies in Biblical Theology, 22 (London: SCM Press, 1957) p. 23. Lampe distinguishes typology from allegory which "takes no account of history", whereas typology "is grounded upon the Biblical writers' own understanding of history", p. 31 and 32. See also 'Typology, Allegory and Analogy' in James D. Smart's The Interpretation of Scripture, The Preacher's Library (London: SCM Press, 1961) pp. 93 - 133.

124. 'Remembrances of America', The Christian Century, 1963, 7ff. cited in Busch, op. cit., p. 488; Conversations with youth chaplains from the Rhineland, 4 November, 1963, cited in Busch, op. cit., p. 375.

Christian doctrines?

BASIC DEFICIENCIES

It will be seen straight away that the strength of the exposition lies in its full and systematic treatment of man in creation. Barth's thought is coherent and structured because the nature of human creation is always explained in terms of God's humanity in Jesus Christ. We have already drawn attention to the depth and richness of much of his exposition in this direction. What is much less clear is the theological significance of creation itself. For Barth never addresses himself fully and directly to the status and purpose of the non-human creation in itself and as such. I shall now try to draw out the limitations involved in this omission.

(i) Christological Deficiency

I mean by this that there exists a whole dimension of relationship between Christ and creation that must be laid to one side if creation is to be viewed in a wholly anthropocentric way. There is, of course, a sense in which anthropocentricity is right and inevitable (see pp. 169f.; 304-10) but the problematical aspect of Barth's analysis is the way in which it precludes full consideration of creation as it is in itself. It is not that Barth fails to see meaning, purpose and significance in creation; it is rather, that what he sees is too limited. He deals with questions relating to non-human creation in a largely notional way, that is, he frequently perceives an intellectual and logical relationship between one thing and another, and states such a connection without necessarily developing it in full. Here are seven examples which have some Christological bearing:

(a) Speaking of Jesus Christ, Barth asserts, "it is here that God has revealed the relationship between Creator and creature - its basis, norm and meaning".¹²⁵ That there must be a relationship is evident, but he

125. CD, III, 1, p. 25.

does not expound what kind of meaning is involved for the non-human creature.

(b) "When we have discovered man as God's creature ... in Jesus Christ, we have made a direct discovery of heaven and earth as the object of the divine act of creation". Once again Barth posits the necessity of one discovery involving another. But what meaning has the discovery if the full meaning of the creation itself is undiscovered? The point is not developed.

(c) "We have established that from every angle Jesus Christ is the key to the secret of creation." Again that there should be an important connection is evident, but has Barth established it from "every angle"? He continues: "It is thus clear that the knowledge of creation, of the Creator and of the creature, is a knowledge of faith, and that here too the Christian doctrine is a doctrine of faith".¹²⁶ Barth here assumes that he has established a knowledge of creation and the creature. In fact, however, he has only established a knowledge of the reality of created humanity through the knowledge of God's humanity in Christ.

(d) "The fact that God has regard to His Son - the Son of Man, the Word made flesh is the true and genuine basis of creation ... a genuine necessity is constituted by the fact that from all eternity He willed so to love the world, and did so love it, that He gave His only begotten Son".¹²⁷ Once again that the one statement implies the other is evident, but what is striking is that Barth nowhere develops this crucial notional relationship between Christ's incarnation and God's love for the world. If this is a "genuine necessity" why are we not told more of it? At this crucial point why are we not informed of the meaning and purpose of the world that

126. CD, III, 1, p. 28.

127. CD, III, 1, p. 51.

must stem from such a correlation and confession?

(e) "The inner basis of the covenant is simply the free love of God, or more precisely the eternal covenant which God has decreed in Himself as the covenant of the Father with the Son as the Lord and bearer of human nature, and to that extent the Representative (Vertreter) of all creation".¹²⁸ That the Son should be the Vertreter of all is an important and striking implication here, but Barth nowhere develops it further. The implication is clear, that incarnation somehow involves creation, but beyond that we are not told more.

(f) "... it is man whom God has chosen and created as a sign of the future which he has destined for all creation as such".¹²⁹ Once again that there exists a connection between God's incarnation in creation and his purposes for the future of this creation seems evident. But how this future may be "for all creation" is not explained further.

(g) "Since everything is created for Jesus Christ and His death and resurrection, from the very outset everything must stand under this twofold and contradictory determination".¹³⁰ That there exists a relationship between incarnation and everything created could not be more tellingly expressed. But the question must be asked: what is the meaning of this relationship?

It will be seen from the foregoing that Barth does indeed see the necessity, both theological and logical, of positing a close relationship of meaning between the Word and the creation in which the Word is revealed. Again and again Barth comes back to stating such a notional relationship. In offering exegesis of Genesis 1: 3, he speaks of how "the creature in its

128. CD, III, 1, p. 97.

129. CD, III, 1, p. 238.

130. CD, III, 1, p. 376.

totality was allied to this living, divine Person (the Word), being wholly referred to it for its existence and essence, its survival and sustenance".¹³¹ As before, this is a provocative statement about the relationship between creation and the sustaining power of Christ. But its potential edge is taken away because we are not given a clear idea of the relationship between "the creature in its totality" and the humanity affirmed by the Word. Why is it that, at this point (like so many others), having established the necessity of a connection and correspondence, Barth grows silent?

The answer unfortunately is only too clear. The silence is a consequence of Barth's considerable skill and concentration in keeping to his pre-determined points of exegesis. In interpreting the first creation saga, Barth moved determinedly to his pre-identified point and climax, namely man as the covenant partner of God, called (in his duality of male and female) to share the Sabbath rest. Everything, we have seen, moves inexorably from one stage and circle of creation to another, stopping not at the creation of man itself, but at the identification of divine purpose beyond the eternal work of creation. In this sense the considerable strength of Barth's exposition is also its weakness. For in grasping and sustaining one (undoubtedly vital) piece of exegesis he pushes to the background another (equally vital) insight. All this would be unexceptional in the sense that most theological work advances by isolating some (often neglected) insights and bringing them into focus with others, if it were not for Barth's insistence that Christology is the centre of understanding in this matter and that creation cannot actually be rendered intelligible without the latter. We can only indicate the range of connection and correspondence which is not pursued more fully: (i) the relationship

131. CD, III, 1, p. 110.

between Christ as the Co-creator with the Father and therefore the agent sustaining creation, and non-human creation; (ii) the relationship between the affirmation by God in Christ of human nature in the incarnation and the non-human creation; (iii) the relationship between the lordship of Christ in the incarnation and the lordship (dominion) of man over non-human creation; (iv) the relationship between God's election of man to a covenant relationship, pre-figurative of the relationship between Christ and his Church, and the non-human creation, and finally (v) the relationship between the reconciling work of Christ in man and the non-human creation. These points notionally established by Barth could, if developed further, yield a rich and promising Christological interpretation of creation..

(ii) Biblical Deficiency

The covenant relationship is the major interpretive theme of the two creation sagas. Yet Barth's approach to this matter as it affects the non-human is a classic example of his notional method. He indicates in a footnote: "And in the covenant made with Noah after the flood there are included not only his sons, and their posterity, but also expressly "every living creature that is with you" (Gen. 9: 10).¹³² Notionally Barth acknowledges that non-human living beings form part of the covenant relationship. He sees the connection and states it. But nowhere in the whole of Part One does he explore the meaning of this connection. It is as if Barth practically proceeds as if he had not noted the text. Indeed his outline summary clearly states the omission, thus:

But according to this witness (the biblical witness) the purpose and therefore the meaning of creation is to make possible the history of God's covenant with man which has its beginning, its centre and its culmination in Jesus Christ. The history of this covenant is as much the goal of creation as creation itself is the beginning of this history.¹³³

132. CD, III, 1, n. p. 180.

133. CD, III, 1, p. 42; my italics.

This omission is so serious that when viewed in the light of Barth's whole exposition, it necessarily undermines his entire work. For it cannot be said that the covenant relationship with man alone is the goal of creation. It cannot be said that God has uniquely endowed man with this capacity and thus that his being is especially and exclusively equipped for this relationship. It cannot be maintained that man's sexual differentiation is uniquely bound up with his sole capacity for the covenant relationship. It cannot be said that man alone is called upon to participate in Sabbath rest. It cannot be said that the sole purpose "and therefore the meaning" of creation is God's covenant with man. It cannot be said that non-human creation can only "prefigure and prepare" for this relationship if in fact the non-human are included within it. It cannot be said that God actualised and justified creation with the sole purpose of establishing man as his covenant partner which has its culmination in Jesus Christ. It cannot be said that this is the only point at which we can affirm the goodness of creation or celebrate the divine purpose within it. It cannot be said that this one relationship makes sense of the entirety of creation, if, as inseparable from this relationship, God has in fact purposed other such relationships within the creation order. "The anthropocentric procedure characteristic of Reformed theology is not to be confused with that Idealism which makes man the measure of all things", writes Whitehouse who offers in addition these stern words: "The theologian must not proceed as though the significance of non-human creatures were exhausted by their contribution to the being of man".¹³⁴ In challenging Barth in these terms one need not deny that the covenant relationship with man is central to the biblical witness or that it should be seen as having overriding significance. But as I hope to show the total significance

134. Whitehouse, 'The Christian view of Man: An Examination of Karl Barth's Doctrine' in op. cit., p. 18; my italics.

of man may be actually weakened, rather than strengthened, by the exclusive emphasis advanced here (see pp. 159-60).

(iii) Ontological Deficiency

Barth's approach desperately lacks some definition of how the non-human creation stands in relation to the human. Because he does not offer a full account of the meaning and purpose of the non-human as it is in itself, the main tendency in his work is to see the non-human purpose instrumentally in relation to man. I mean by this that he frequently subsumes questions concerning the status and significance of the non-human to other questions concerning their use, value or significance to human beings. Six examples from the first saga will illustrate the nature of Barth's instrumental method:-

(i) The separation of the firmaments of heaven and earth (Gen 1: 6 - 8) is essentially for man. "Thus the upper, hidden cosmos (now separated) cannot be an object of real terror for man", writes Barth, and he continues: "He (man) need not fear that chaos, death and destruction will crash down upon him from heaven".¹³⁵ Again in concluding this section, "From the very beginning, from the foundation of the world, God has had good intentions toward man".¹³⁶

(ii) The creation of dry land (Gen 1: 9 - 13) is "the living space of man".¹³⁷ While on the one hand Barth accepts that the plant is "created for its own sake as well",¹³⁸ on the other his concluding remarks support his anthropocentrism: "it is in this way, and this way alone, that we can understand the work of the third day ... as the erection of a table in the

135. CD, III, 1, p. 134; my italics.

136. CD, III, 1, p. 135; my italics.

137. CD, III, 1, p. 141; my italics.

138. CD, III, 1, p. 143.

midst of this house which is finally and supremely for man".¹³⁹

(iii) The furnishing of the cosmos (Gen 1: 14 - 19) and the creation of the lights are for man. "They serve the purpose of orientation", writes Barth. Moreover "it belongs to creation that man should be given this objective direction ... that is why man's cosmos should not merely be orientated by God but orientating for man".¹⁴⁰

(iv) The creation of birds and fish (Gen 1: 20 - 23) belong to the "outermost circle" and receive divine blessing.¹⁴¹ Barth writes: "The spectacle offered in these spheres is one to inspire confidence for man."¹⁴² This is because they "must also bear witness" to the divine-human covenant.¹⁴³

(v) The creation of living, creeping beings (Gen 1: 24 - 31) means the creation of attendant witnesses to the covenant, "not as an independent partner(s)"⁽¹⁴⁴⁾ but as attendants animal-kind shares the hope and curse of human-kind.

(vi) The creation of man (Gen 1: 24 - 31) is the climax of creation. Thus "If we think of the rest of creation without man, we can think in terms of something other than God, but only in the sense of something distinct from God and not of a counterpart".¹⁴⁵ Everything in creation "prepares" for or "prefigures" the place of man. Finally "What distinguishes him (man) and gives him authority and power is that fact that, although he

139. CD, III, 1, p. 144; my italics.

140. CD, III, 1, p. 158; my italics.

141. CD, III, 1, p. 170.

142. CD, III, 1, p. 169; my italics.

143. CD, III, 1, p. 171.

144. CD, III, 1, p. 178.

145. CD, III, 1, p. 184.

is not radically different from the other creatures with independent life, he has been honoured by the grace of God to be in the image of God in the uniqueness of his plurality as male and female".¹⁴⁶

The difficulty with Barth's exposition of the first creation saga is not the overriding significance he attributes to man, or the generally high place he occupies in creation. It is rather that, as articulated, non-human creation is seen as incidental and fundamentally irrelevant to the divine disclosure within it. Where is the relationship between Christ as the Co-creator and agent of creation and the revelation within creation? Barth could have benefited here from the lyricism of St. Athanasius who likens the Word to a musician who:

produces a single melody ... holding the universe like a lyre, draws together the things in the air with those on earth, and those in the heaven with those in the air, and combines the whole with the parts, linking them with his command and will, thus producing in beauty and harmony a single world and a single order within it ...

Thus the Logos is seen as extending "his power everywhere, illuminating all things visible and invisible, containing and enclosing them in himself", giving "life and everything, everywhere, to each individually and to all together" thus creating an exquisite "single euphonious harmony".¹⁴⁷ The second difficulty is that Barth comes perilously close to assuming an Anthropozentrismus of an unqualified kind. He writes of "man's cosmos" in clear opposition to his previous thought that creation is made for Christ and his disclosure within it. The slip into identifying the goodness of creation with its purpose for man-as-man, seriously weakens his Christological emphasis. For, as Barth indicates, it is the affirmation

146. CD, III, 1, p. 188.

147. Athanasius, Contra Gentes and De Incarnatione, ed. and ET by Robert W. Thompson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971) pp. 117 and 115.

of God's humanity in Christ and not humanity plain and simple that is the central point of Christian understanding. Perhaps it is for this reason that creation appears only partially intelligible in the light of the Word. For the most part we do not know why the grass grows, the sun shines and creation teems with millions of varying species. These aspects of creation are not genuinely necessary to the Word incarnate as Barth expounds them. They are beings in the context of whose existence the revelation of an entirely different being is made manifest. There is no intrinsic relationship between Christ incarnate and Christ the Co-creator here defended. Because of this it must be questioned whether Barth actually gives us a doctrine of creation as it is in itself.¹⁴⁸

One further query must be raised. This concerns the nature of man as defined by Barth's exegesis. Since his approach involves seeing the whole meaning of creation as disclosed in the divine-human covenant, he therefore has no alternative but to argue that "it is in their (animals') relationship to him (man) that they are what they are".¹⁴⁹ In this sense, as we have seen, the meaning of the non-human can only be understood in terms of the human. Without this frame of reference their lives are largely or completely inexplicable. But does this approach also limit man's place in creation? Does this mean that man cannot be free to be a creature among other

148. I do not, however, share the view of Rowan Williams that because Barth cannot offer some form of natural theology he "has as little of a doctrine of creation as Hegel" and that in opposition to Hegel, God and the world are "entirely discontinuous". "The Fall has, it seems, obliterated any theological significance in the created order as such in the Barthian picture ..." 'Barth on the Triune God', in Karl Barth: Studies of his Theological Methods, op. cit., p. 188. This wide judgement cannot be reconciled with Barth's strong emphasis on the incarnation and his utter determination to minimise the effect of the Fall in particular (see pp. 240f.). The Fall indeed makes no difference to the theological standing of creation as such. Where I agree with Williams, however, is in his concern about Barth's insufficiently developed doctrine of the Spirit active within creation, op. cit., pp. 181f.

149. CD, III, 1, p. 292.

creatures within creation? Is man free to see creation as intelligible except in the light of himself? Is he truly free to meet other creatures as objects of worth in their own right? Is he free to say with God that creation is "good" since outside his relationship with them they appear to have no value, purpose or significance? On this account it seems as if the very possibility of man encountering creation and recognising himself in relation to it is taken away, for there cannot be any human discovery of the intrinsic meaning of other creatures. At the very least we should say that "Barth's grounding of the history between God and man in the eternal trinitarian being of God obscures somewhat the independent status of the created order".¹⁵⁰

Once this possibility is grasped, it will be seen that the danger in Barth's exposition is that man as created is seen as existing within his own morally exclusive world. The reality of Creator and created gives way to a quasi-Platonic notion of the real (human) creation and the unreal (non-human) creation. What appears solely real and purposeful is human creation as affirmed in Christ. Man is thus set adrift from creation for the relationship of purpose which unites the Word with the creation as a whole, and through which the world is redeemed, is unavoidably severed.

(iv) Trinitarian Deficiency

What is wanting in Barth is some description of God's interaction with creation as a whole. Where is the necessary concretisation of God's initiative and sovereignty? This question must appear odd in relation to the one theologian in this century who has seemingly done so much to defend the sovereignty of God in creation. In any case it would certainly not be possible to convict Barth

150. Robert E. Willis, The Ethics of Karl Barth (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971) p. 437.

of being wholly wrong in this matter. For the divine-human covenant relationship is the natural place to begin interpreting "the inner basis of creation". Much of Barth's analysis of the place of man in that context is profound and illuminating. The weakness is simply that in tying all creation to this divine-human encounter, the very possibility of divine initiative and purpose within the non-human creation is eclipsed. So anthropocentrically are the lines drawn that even the furnishing of the cosmos is really intended for man and not for the life of all creatures together. Even in the second creation saga, where Barth reaches a real possibility of affirming the independent value of non-human forms of life, he shrinks from its full exploration. We have seen how potentially transforming some of his comments could have been in this area if only he had taken time to develop them fully. The most startling of these was the suggestion that man stands in relation to creation as one who serves, "the being who had to be created for the sake of the earth and to serve it".¹⁵¹ If only he had developed this vision of man as sharing in the divine work of reconciliation within the cosmos, his substantive conclusions may well have been very different. As it is in Part One man is strangely irrelevant to the actual life of creation which is sustained and loved by God. For this is surely the point: if creation is a dynamic organism, given life by a truly creative Creator, should our eyes not be set upon the work of the Spirit within creation as well as upon its reconciliation by the Son?

We point here to what appears to be a strange omission. For whilst Barth is wholly trinitarian in his opening statement of God's relationship to the world, he is oddly binitarian in his choice of relationships which are said to express this inner unity and correspondence. In practice this

151. CD, III, 1, p. 235.

is only achieved by leaving to one side (temporarily, of course) the work of God as Holy Spirit. Every inner correspondence and relationship points to the work of the Son, or the Father and the Son, or Christ and His Church, but seldom if at all, to the Holy Spirit. We are simply not given any fundamental analogy that would enable us to see the pre-figurative work of the Spirit in creation. "One of the fundamental contradictions of Barth's teaching is the fact that it limits the potential agency of the Holy Spirit on man and on the world".¹⁵² I do not want to pre-judge here the important section on the Spirit in relation to the question of body and soul discussed in Part Two (see pp. 250f.) but it is significant that the threefoldness of God and the prefigurative relationships which may express them do not form any part of this work so far. Is the Spirit active in creation, even in its non-human parts? What function does the Spirit fulfil within the created order loved and cherished by God and redeemed by the Son? Is not the life of all beings breathed upon by the Holy Spirit one way in which the divine purpose within creation can be characterised? And what purpose has the Spirit-filled life of non-human creation? Barth, of course, insists that the life of the Spirit in human beings is different at least in degree from that of animals, but even so he does not deny that the same creative force is the basis of both. Could it be that his strong emphasis upon the election of man as a covenant partner, and therefore the development of analogies of relationship between Christ and his Church, has actually weakened the fullest statement of the threefold relationship of God as Trinity to the created world as a whole?

"The third person of the Trinity ... is the mode of being of the one God by whose activity is anticipated the future redemption of man and the whole

152. Nicolas Berdyaev, Spirit and Reality, ET by George Reavey (London: Geoffrey Bles, The Centenary Press, 1939), p. 181. Berdyaev's complaint is particularly against the notion that the Holy Spirit is only "eschatologically present in man" (p. 181). Elsewhere he writes in a vein which Barth would surely have approved, e.g. "The tendency to regard the spiritual life as a way of salvation, and Christianity as a religion of personal salvation, has led to spirituality being narrowed, diminished and weakened" (p. 165).

created order of which he is a part".¹⁵³

Christological Reconstruction

We are now in a position to offer some account of how Barth might have presented the question of the non-human and its relationship with the human accepting the framework of presuppositions within which he wishes to work. The sole deviation from this will be (in fidelity to the biblical witness) the inclusion of other living beings within the divine covenant relationship.

A. Christ as Co-creator

We begin by affirming Christ as the Co-creator with the Father of all that is. He is the agent "through whom all things come to be". (Jn. 1: 3) and with the Father the source of love for the world which continually sustains it. From this we deduce that all creation, vegetable, animal and human has divine purpose and significance. By the fact that it is and that it continues to be we have no alternative but to deduce a fundamental divine beneficence towards it. Barth speaks of creation as "presupposition", "the external basis" of God's covenant, "the sphere" or "the stage" of God's subsequent activity.¹⁵⁴ But from the fact of its creation we have no alternative but to affirm at the beginning that God's good creation has value and purpose in itself and as it is. Barth writes that "It would be a strange love (divine love) that was satisfied with the mere existence and nature of the other, then withdrawing, leaving it to its own devices".¹⁵⁵ But the assumption is not as Barth describes it. The fact is that creation cannot be left alone, according to its own devices

153. Gunton, . op. cit., p. 218; my italics. He argues that there is "something like a scholarly consensus that Barth has in many respects failed to keep his concept of God open to the future" (p. 218).

154. CD, III, 1, see pp. 44; 94 - 99.

155. CD, III, 1, p. 95.

and remain creation. This is precisely the point. By the fact that it exists and continues so to do we have no alternative but to accept the beneficent purpose which allows it to be as it is in itself. If only Barth had stated this necessary presupposition at the beginning of his work, the question of the non-human would not have appeared in the sharp form in which it has presented itself. This is not to deny the general force of Barth's insistence that creation is not itself the covenant, that is, the fact of creation does not equal the totality of divine purpose within it. But, and this is the crucial point, the reality of the covenant relationship is only possible, not because God wills the bare existence of the cosmos, but because its actual existence must be purposed by him in order to exist at all. We begin then by affirming categorically that all creation, all that is genuinely creation, has meaning and purpose in itself by virtue of the fact of its divine creation. One other way of expressing this would be to emphasise the essentially dynamic nature of God's creation and its openness to him. Thus all elements or particles within the cosmos are "moving according to their own dynamic, and ... this movement infolds them".¹⁵⁶ This dynamic is nothing less than the work of the Triune God who is perfecting the creation he continually allows to be with him.

B. Christ as God-incarnate

The vital question to be answered is how the work of creation is related to the work of incarnation, that is, what is the relationship between the

¹⁵⁶. Daniel W. Hardy, 'The Dynamics of Creation', unpublished paper presented to the Society for the Study of Theology (1982) p. 29; his italics. Hardy's paper is one of the few attempts to relate distinctly trinitarian theology to models of reality proposed by some of the natural sciences. He writes of how the withdrawal of natural science from theology has meant that the content of theology "has tended increasingly to become a gnosticism concerned with a spiritual reality validated by its connection with a secret tradition of faith ..." (p. 1).

Word which causes all things to be and the disclosure of that Word within creation. Barth's approach as we have seen is to develop every possibility for stating the special significance of man in creation and thus the special appropriateness of the work of incarnation. This is deduced not from speculation about man's special abilities but from what he takes to be the meaning of the incarnation itself. It is not that Barth affirms the special significance of man because of what he wants later to affirm about incarnation; on the contrary the special significance of man must be affirmed because of the fact of incarnation. The reality of creation is therefore subsumed under the fact of incarnation as follows: "The reason why God created this world of heaven and earth, and why the future world will be a new heaven and a new earth, is that God's eternal Son and Logos did not will to be an angel or animal, but a man, and that this and this alone, was the content of the eternal divine election of grace".¹⁵⁷ Barth is not wholly wrong here. He is not wrong that there must be a relationship of purpose between the Logos which creates all things and his disclosure within creation. Where Barth is not right is in his insistence that the divine election of man can bear the entire meaning and significance of the purpose of creation. There are two primary reasons why we must assert that he goes wrong here. In the first place, if as Barth affirms the act of incarnation precedes the act of creation it must follow that the work of binding that creation together must presuppose the entirety of that creation itself. We see that this must be true by supposing the

157. CD, III, 1, p. 18; my italics. Barth's exclusivity closes, prematurely, the question of possible "divine manifestations in other areas or periods of being". Paul Tillich is emphatic about the need to keep this option open: "Incarnation is unique for the special group in which it happens, but it is not unique in the sense that other singular incarnations for other unique worlds are excluded. Man cannot claim that the infinite has entered the finite to overcome its existential estrangement in man alone. Man cannot claim to occupy the only possible place for Incarnation", Systematic Theology, 3 Vols. (London: SCM Press, 1957) Vol I, Part III, Existence and the Christ (1978), p. 96.

contrary. If God's incarnation did not presuppose a creation which was purposeful in its own right then it could not be possible for the divine purpose to be so manifest within it. In the second place, the Word which causes all things to be is the same Word which becomes incarnate in Jesus Christ. It cannot be adequate therefore to juxtapose the two realities as though the one was inferior to the other, or that the one was merely the context in which the other was caused to happen. In Christ the very juxtaposition of creation and incarnation is rendered obsolete. This is not to deny the particular manner of incarnation (and the divine choice which it represents) and the centrality of man within the cosmos. But this is precisely the point. It is man within the cosmos, or as Barth somewhat inadequately puts it "man and his cosmos", that is the subject of the incarnation. This is not to suppose multiple incarnations or to detract from the uniqueness of the one historical incarnation. It is only to insist upon the fundamental purposeful relationship disclosed between the Word and what he has created. Barth almost reaches this point when he writes of the representational relationship of Christ and man. Thus God's Son is seen as "the Representative of all creation"¹⁵⁸ and man "is and represents the secret of the creature".¹⁵⁹ If Christ, as Word and as Word incarnate, represents the totality of creation, that is all that is created which is distinct and apart from God, there cannot be two realities of creation, namely, human and non-human, as Barth sometimes seems to imply, but one creature and one creation albeit differentiated and ordered in a particular way. In summary we may articulate the relationship as follows: Because the Word incarnate is also the Word of creation, that is of the creature, the work of incarnation must represent and actualise the beneficence of God towards all creatures. This is not to deny the centrality

158. CD, III, 1, p. 97.

159. CD, III, 1, p. 18.

of man and his particular work within creation. On the contrary the specific and particular "yes" to man, is part of, and can only take place within the context of, the specific and particular "yes" of God to all creation in all its order and peculiarity. The alternative to this, of appearing to treat as separate and distinct entities the work of creation and the work of incarnation severs the link between the revealing Word and the creation in which the Word is revealed, and in so doing severs the relationship within God as he is in himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. For the work of creation, incarnation, reconciliation and redemption is the work of the same God. In saying this we do not deny the difference and order within the creation itself. Neither do we deny the possibility of closer or more distant relations with God in creation. We merely affirm that no part of creation can be radically distinct from the work of God as defined by trinitarian theology; we merely insist that no one aspect of God's work within creation can be divorced from another. As such, the purpose and meaning of the non-human cannot be treated as though it were relevant to one work of the triune God but irrelevant to another.

Our concern must therefore be to articulate the way in which man's place in creation truly reflects the way in which he is bound through the incarnation to a relationship of affinity and interdependence with creation itself. There are three biblical insights here of significance:

- (i) the image of God in man;
- (ii) the position of dominion, and
- (iii) the covenant relationship.

Barth's treatment of the image of God, as we have seen, is strangely unsatisfactory. This is because he links the giving of the image to the sexual differentiation within man as male and female and therefore to man's

capacity to prefigure within himself the inner life of God as Father and Son. The weakness as we have seen with this account is that it presupposes a unique sexual differentiation in man whereas this differentiation is also present within non-human creation. A far more satisfactory understanding is one that relates the image of God in man to his work within creation, one that sees man's "dominion" or "lordship" over creation following from his prior position in creation. "The dominion is certainly connected with the image, and one might say that, without the image, the dominion would never have been given."¹⁶⁰ Man is the being uniquely charged with the authority of God within creation, to act as his vice-gerent and steward and thus the one who has God-like power and responsibility. This is reinforced in the first saga where the granting of dominion has clear limits especially concerning the use of animals for food and cannot therefore be of an unrestricted kind.¹⁶¹ In the second saga the relationship of man to the earth is expressed in an even more striking way. His existence is actually necessary to the earth for its flourishing and cultivation. Barth accepts that this "dominion" of man is a prefiguring, perhaps even a participation in the "lordship" of Christ but he does not draw out precisely the obvious Christological significance

160. David Cairns, The Image of God in Man, intro. by D.E. Jenkins, The Fontana Library of Theology and Philosophy (London: Collins, 1973), p. 28. Cf. C.F.D. Moule: "Perhaps the most satisfying of the many interpretations, both ancient and modern of the meaning of the image ... is that which sees it as basically responsibility", Man and Nature in the New Testament: Some Reflections on Biblical Ecology (London: The Athlone Press, 1964), p. 5; his italics.

161. Cf. "In the case of animals there is a limit to man's dominion. Their blood, that is to say their life, belongs to God", Cairns, op. cit., p. 29. A powerful idea which continues to find expression in literature of all kinds. Kasyan remonstrates with the hunter: "A fish doesn't have feelings, it has no living blood in it ... Blood, blood is holy! Blood does not see the light of God's sun, blood is hidden from the light ... And a great sin it is to show blood to the light of day, a great sin and cause to be fearful, oh, a great one it is!" Ivan Turgenev, 'Kasyan from the Beautiful Lands' in Sketches from a Hunter's Album, selected and ET by Richard Freeborn, Penguin Classics (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983) p. 89. The Kasyan story is a remarkable essay on the morality of hunting and the theological questions it raises.

and meaning of this. We may articulate it now. In the same way that the power, priority and authority of God is expressed by Christ in his katabasis, his humility, his self-costly loving, his active compassion for the weak and helpless, so man is placed within creation to express and exercise a similar lordship and responsibility. This analogy of relationship offers a rich Christological dimension on which to build a distinctively Christian reading of the biblical witness. In this sense we may see the meaning of the notion of representation to which Barth sometimes alludes. Man is to be the Vertreter of Christ, the Logos, in creation. He is to represent and focus within himself the purpose of God in creation. Not just within himself as the mark of his humanity in the strangely undynamic way in which Barth suggests, but in his relationship and ordering of creation, he is to be the agent of God's purposeful design. In this anthropocentricity? At first it might appear so. But the important feature of this human work is its necessarily sacrificial quality; it is man who gives of himself for the earth in the strikingly similar way that Christ humbles himself in creation.¹⁶² If we interpret the image and the notion of dominion in this sense, we are able to provide the fullest Christological basis for man's relationship with the non-human because we are able to characterise this relationship in a moral way.

But the strongest ground for affirming the moral bond between animals and man consists in the divine election of both within the covenant relationship.

162. Many exegetes of Genesis miss this vital point. E.g. "The word dominion is related to the Latin word dominus; he is one who has gained the upper hand; he has come out on top. To exercise dominion ... is to fasten one's will upon that situation ... to subordinate, render subject, make subservient", Leonard Verduin, Somewhat Less than God: The Biblical View of Man (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1970), p. 28; his italics. Stated in these bold terms, it is the precise antithesis of Genesis. Man's dominion is under the lordship of God; its exercise is to serve not autonomous man but the will of God. It is only "responsible authority" that is "God-like", Moule, op. cit., p. 5.

It is at this point that we must include the theme that Barth neglects. From all that he has said about the covenant relationship we know that this one relation more than any other reflects and prefigures the inner life of God himself. It is this one relationship which he characterises as the "inner basis of creation" itself. The inclusion of other "living beings" at this point vitally alters the way in which we may understand the triune work of creation and incarnation. We may affirm that man exists as Christ's moral paradigm within creation. The Christian life as "imitation of Christ commits the believer to obedience to the 'method' of Jesus". "The Incarnation is seen by the Christian as the way God would have his truth taught", writes E.J. Tinsley.¹⁶³ In this sense it is the way of humility, self-sacrifice, costly-loving, so exemplified in the life of Jesus, that must be for us the moral exemplar in our relations even for the least among us. Does Barth grasp something of this possibility when he writes that "man's salvation and perdition, his joy and sorrow, will be reflected in the weal and woe of this animal environment and company"?¹⁶⁴ But this should properly be affirmed, not simply because, as Barth would have it, animals are "attendant witnesses" to the covenant, but because they actually share with man the divine hope and blessing which the covenant represents. It is on man, once lost and now found, that rests the responsibility to focus and exercise the moral reality of the covenant. It is for this reason that we can understand the biblical emphasis on man as the pivotal covenant partner. This is not because, as Barth would surmise, other living beings are irrelevant to it, but because - in the words of Wingren - "Man must be restored in order that God's Creation may become whole and perfect again".¹⁶⁵

163. Tinsley, The Imitation of God in Christ: An Essay on the Biblical Basis of Christian Spirituality, The Library of History and Doctrine (London: SCM press, 1960) p. 180.

164. CD, III, 1, p. 178.

165. Wingren, op. cit., p. 101.

C. Christ as Reconciler

Because Barth places a wedge between the act of creation and the work of incarnation as it concerns the non-human, it is not surprising that the non-human creation, even the living beings within the covenant relationship, are seen to be incidental to the work of reconciliation. "The secret, the meaning and goal of creation is that it reveals, or that there is revealed in it, the covenant and communion between God and man" writes Barth.¹⁶⁶ By implication it may be assumed that the meaning of the reconciling work of God may be exhausted in its relation to man and the covenant. And yet Barth does not want to give up entirely on the biblical witness that the world, the Kosmos, participates in the work of reconciliation through the Son. In a poignant passage (to which we have referred before), writing in answer to the question concerning the joy and sorrow of created life, he replies:

The answer is to be found in the fact that the revelation of God the Creator so closely binds the life which He has created with the covenant in which He willed to make Himself the Lord and Helper and Saviour of man: with the reconciliation of the world with Himself to be accomplished in Jesus Christ. In this intention of the Creator and therefore this final goal of the creature as manifested in the divine revelation, there is implied from the very outset ... a twofold determination: on one hand an exaltation and dignity of the creature in the sight of God ...; and on the other hand the equally clear need and peril of the creature before Him ... God created man to lift him in His own Son into fellowship with Himself. This is the positive meaning of human existence and all existence. But this elevation presupposes a wretchedness of human and all existence which His own Son will share and bear. This is the negative meaning of creation. Since everything is created for Jesus Christ and His death and resurrection, from the very outset everything must stand under this twofold and contradictory determination.¹⁶⁷

Despite his overall position, Barth comes interestingly close here to an affirmation of God's reconciling work in Christ as it relates to all parts

166. CD, III, 1, p. 377; my italics.

167. CD, III, 1, p. 376; my italics.

of creation in their brighter and darker sides. But the logic of his position necessarily points him in an even more definite direction. For if "everything" is made for Jesus Christ then it must follow that the work of reconciliation is inclusive of all things. Or if "the negative meaning" of creation, as Barth sees this, is that Christ should "share and bear" all the sorrow of creation, so that all its potentiality is experienced in him (albeit transiently within his incarnate life), then it cannot but follow that all suffering creation must be included within the work of reconciliation. It is the reconciliation, not just of creation in general, but of all things capable of suffering and sorrow for which Christ died, if we are tenaciously to follow the line of thought which Barth advances.¹⁶⁸ But if this is true, it cannot be held that the total meaning of the work of reconciliation is exhausted in its relationship with man, and thus, and this is a critical inference, that man alone stands as the solely reconciled object of God's work in Christ. Barth simply does not appreciate that the logic of his position concerning the work of reconciliation wholly undermines his anthropocentric thesis, a point we may affirm without denying either that man remains the centre of God's reconciling work through the incarnation or that man is centrally significant. Christ is "the Saviour of the universe (tou pantos)" writes Athanasius¹⁶⁹ and is not this the inexorable conclusion to which Barth's logic leads us?

168. Mascall indicates the "very wide range" of possibilities "between which orthodox Christian doctrine leaves us perfectly free to decide" when it comes to understanding God's reconciling work for the non-human. It could be that man is the only rational creature that needs redemption. It could be that there "may or may not be somewhere in the universe rational beings" who may "have fallen". "If they have fallen, their redemption may or may not require that the Son of God should become incarnate in their nature". Or it could be that "by becoming incarnate in one rational species, the Son of God has ipso facto become the redeemer of all", The Christian Universe, op. cit., pp. 106/. It will be seen that I regard the last possibility as the most convincing. Are not all things summed up in Christ?

169. Athanasius, op. cit., p. 5.

Barth himself recognises that "The linking of man and beast in the account of the sixth day of creation corresponds to a familiar thought in the Old and New Testaments".¹⁷⁰ Indeed he itemises the examples of this closeness of relationship, emphasising in particular the ways in which man and animals are seen as experiencing together both the hope and the judgement of the Lord as, for example, in Ezekiel 38: 20. As we have grown to expect, however, he does not see the fundamental theological significance of this connection. It is that as created on the same day, man and animals share the same hope of reconciliation and renewal. Barth never ponders why it should be that man and animals share together the grace and judgement of God. The answer, of course, moves in an opposite direction to the path taken. It implies that human and animal-kind are fundamentally related, not in any identical work or function, but in the work of God in Christ as Creator, Incarnate and Reconciler. The inner circles of creation participate more fully in the work of reconciliation than any other parts of creation. To this must be added the significance of the practice of animal sacrifice. If, we have suggested, this practice is most properly seen as the freeing of an animal, its actual liberation to be with God which is its end, then we cannot but see animal sacrifice as prefigurative of the sacrificial work of Christ in reconciliation. In this way animals may be seen as participating in the earliest tradition of reconciliation, which strengthens the vision of the inseparability of human and animal-kind within the covenant relationship.

D. Christ as Redeemer

Our argument so far has been that man and creation are fundamentally related not only by the Word incarnate but through the same Logos which is the source of all creation. Because they are related in that way it

170. CD, III, 1, n. p. 180.

must follow that the work of reconciliation is inclusive of all creation. Within this work, however, there is an order and a priority. It is through man, firstly in the Christological sense, and secondarily through man constituted to complete the work of Herrschaft within creation, that the reconciling work of God is completed. Man is central to this process as the Vertreter focus of creation on one hand, and of Christ as the icon of creation on the other. The work of reconciliation proceeds outwards from the Father to the Son, to its basis in the incarnate Logos, to man the moral paradigm within creation, and from man to the inner circles of creation which are bound to him through God's covenant relationship, and thus in the work of service within that covenant to the whole earth. The work of man is therefore to represent the redemptive purposes of God and to actualise them with his own relationship with other living beings. Barth, of course, does not overlook the possibility of redemption of all creation. But in relation to the non-human his discussion consists of only fourteen lines within a footnote. We reproduce it in full:

Paul's well-known statement in Rom. 8: 19 about the ἀποκαταδουκία of the κτίσις which involuntarily, for man's sake, and therefore not without hope, has been subjected to vanity, and thus groans and travails with us for the day of the Messiah, certainly applies to beasts. It is not for nothing that, in its totally different nature and form of existence, it is so near to the innermost circle of creation. It is not for nothing that it is blessed with the same blessing with which man is also blessed. This means that it is also burdened with the curse which man has to carry. It shares in the confusion of his existence and his world. It must suffer and die for him. But (in its own way) it will be freed from the bondage of φθορά into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. "O Lord, thou preservest man and beast" (Ps. 36: 6) is a thread which runs through the whole of the Bible; and it first emerges in a way which is quite unmistakable when

the creation of man is classified in Gen 1. 24f with that of the land animals.¹⁷¹

But the notion of the redemption of all creation is far more significant than Barth's treatment of this one passage would imply. In the first place, Barth points to the fundamental bond between man and animals which this passage suggests. The creation is actually linked with man to share

171. CD, III, 1, n. p. 181; my italics. If we ask why Barth does not take up more forcefully Paul's insight into the liberation of creation, there seem to be two answers. The first is that Barth's early writing on Romans develops a fundamental dichotomy between man seen in terms of God on one hand, and man seen in terms of the world on the other. When it comes therefore to ascribing anything other than transitory theological significance to the world, he is restrained by his dialectic. "We cannot, surely, pronounce the created world to be direct, genuine, and eternal life". It is not this world which is eternal, but the world in the mind of God, "the new heaven and the new earth", "which the Father hath subjected to Himself through the Son". The new birth of which St Paul speaks "can never take place in time", The Epistle to the Romans, ET by E.C. Hoskyns, Oxford Paperbacks (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968) pp. 308, 310. By this tortuous exegesis, we are delivered from the need to wrestle with God's redeeming activity in the world as it is and in the present time. The point is made by F.W. Camfield: "We do not know what time may mean for beings other than ourselves, the lower creation for example. We could not make with confidence the assertions about them which we have made for ourselves", 'Man in his Time', Scottish Journal of Theology, 3, 2 (1950) p. 139. But in this way one of the important creaturely characteristics described by Paul, which unites man and other creatures, is lost. The second reason why Barth loses the edge of this important passage is simply that he stands in a tradition of similar neglect. His dependence on Calvin and Luther is clear. Luther offers no exegesis of the travail of the non human. The sighings and earnest expectation of the creatures are important but only because they show the folly of scientists and philosophers who "have no thought whatsoever for the end for which it was created". Moreover, "the creature subject to vanity" in v. 20 refers primarily or, possibly even exclusively, to man. In this way Luther is freed from offering any account of the end of the non-human. Lectures on Romans, ed. and ET by Wilhelm Pauck, The Library of Christian Classics (London: SCM Press, 1961) Vol. XV, pp. 236-8. Calvin is characteristically bolder. All creatures are cursed: "all innocent creatures from earth to heaven are punished for our sins". Will their redemption therefore be the greater? Calvin is reticent. They will be redeemed only "in their own manner" (Barth seems to have taken over this notion). Calvin protests against "unbalanced commentators" who ask "whether all kinds of animals will be immortal". "If we give free rein to these speculations, where will they finally carry us?" The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and the Thessalonians, eds. D.W. Torrance and T.F. Torrance, ET by Ross Mackenzie, Calvin's Commentaries (Edinburgh and London: Oliver & Boyd, 1961) pp. 173-174.

his suffering "not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it in hope" (8: 20) and therefore shares man's blessing and curse. As Barth correctly expounds it, the meaning of animals at least is fundamentally tied to the existence of the human. Animals are inextricably related in terms of their being by God's decree to their relationship with human beings. But the problem is that Barth simply does not appreciate that such a fundamental relationship makes the significance of animals greater rather than lesser.

In the second place, as we have observed before, if it is really true that the bond which unites animals and man is so strong that no other statement of their purpose and end can be described other than in relation to man then it must follow that everything that Barth wishes to claim for the special relationship of man to God must be claimed at least in principle for the relationship between man and animals as well (see pp. 99f.).

The logic is clear: it is not that animals "in their own way" participate in redemption but that they participate by virtue of their fundamental relationship with man in "his way" of redemption. If animals have no independent existence in themselves save as involuntary co-sufferers with man then it must follow that the same divine work of redemption necessarily extends to every part which is so affected. In this sense we see that Barth only maintains the coherence of his work by avoiding the implications of those biblical witnesses which point in a different direction. It is not that Barth denies them. He gives notional validity to them. He does not oppose the notion of God's reconciling work concerning all things or that man is placed within this overall design and purpose; or that the redemptive activity of God includes even the most unlikely (as he sees them) spheres of creation. But these insights stand in contrast to the centrally anthropocentric design and character of Part One.

It will be seen, however, that much more needs to be said about the relations between the human and the non-human in creation, and with this in mind we now turn to the second part of Barth's work on creation concerning the doctrine of the human itself.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE LONG QUEST FOR A DISTINCTIVE HUMANITY IN
OPPOSITION TO THE NON-HUMAN

"The most massive account of the doctrine of man in our times" is the Editors' claim for Part Two of Barth's work on creation.¹ Barth himself accepts that his "new path" had meant becoming a "pioneer".² His theological method had involved departing more widely from past dogmatic tradition especially concerning the question of the "so-called 'soul'". But this "new path" hinges as always on his method, for all depends upon his theological doctrine being "not only possible, but the only one possible".³

Creation Doctrine not Cosmology

The first section is entitled 'Man as a Problem of Dogmatics' and sub-titled 'Man in the Cosmos'. Barth begins by maintaining that "in practice the doctrine of creation means anthropology - the doctrine of man". Why should this be so? In the first place, man is not the only creature. "Man is only a creature and not the creature" argues Barth.⁴ Man is only one part of the created cosmos. In this sense "the Word of God does not envisage man except in his insignificance". Non-humans have "their own dignity and right" and that "enveloped in the secret of their own relation to their Creator". And if this is the case, it is "a serious question" as to whether the doctrine of creation "should not be expounded as a doctrine of the totality, of the whole created cosmos". Barth is clear that while it is not the task of dogmatics to present cosmology, there can be no isolating of man from the rest of created order. For even if the dominant theme of theological dogmatics is man, this must not spell an attitude of "blindness,

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1. Barth, Church Dogmatics, III, 2, The Doctrine of Creation, Part Two ('The Creature') eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance, ET by H. Knight, G.W. Bromiley, J.K.S. Reid and R.H. Fuller (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1960) p. vii (Editors' Preface).
 2. CD, III, 2, p. x (Preface).
 3. CD, III, 2, p. ix (Preface).
 4. CD, III, 2, p. 3; his italics. Barth argues the contrary in his lectures on theological ethics published after his death: "Man is the creature of God. This is where we start", Ethics, ed. by Dietrich Braun, ET by G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1981) p. 118. Ethically his treatment entirely reflects the anthropocentric standpoint which doctrinally he appears to reject.

indifference or disparagement" to the remainder.⁵ Barth locates the justification for this tradition of theological anthropology (theologische Anthropologie) in the true object of theology: "The Word of God is concerned with God and man". Moreover this Word "does not contain any ontology of heaven and earth themselves."⁶ Barth accepts, however, that human witnesses to the Word of God may ally themselves with various cosmologies at various times, but he is insistent that there is no "specific cosmology" (Kosmologie, Weltanschauung, Weltbild) which is central to theology. He gives five justifications for this view. In the first place, while human witness to the Word has allied itself with various cosmologies, no one Christian world-view has emerged. There has always been "more or less critical use of alien (world) views".⁷ Secondly, faith in the Word can never "find its theme in the totality of the created heaven and earth". There may be various formulations of one or another varied component in the created order, but no one element (save that of man) properly locates the true Christian focus. Thirdly, faith must in the last resort be "supremely non-committal" to the assumptions and consequences of such cosmologies. In the end "faith is radically disloyal to them", and "accepts no responsibility for their foundation, structure, validity or propagation".⁸ Therefore, fourthly, faith when expressed in one or another full or partial world-view is essentially deviation from true faith. Such deviation is always possible in the life of the church but can never be the norm of faith itself. Lastly, faith is in this sense autonomous of all world-views: inevitable "marks of contradiction" appear between these attempted unions. As an example, Barth gives the use of the Babylonian creation myths in the Genesis saga for whilst it appears to make use of them, "it actually criticises the latter at every stage".⁹ The question

5. CD, III, 2, p. 4.

6. CD, III, 2, p. 6.

7. CD, III, 2, p. 7.

8. CD, III, 2, p. 8 and n. p. 8.

9. CD, III, 2, p. 10 and n. p. 10.

is resolved. Theology is therefore "anthropocentric" in the sense "prescribed by the Word of God; the orientation on Man".¹⁰

Barth then proceeds to describe how dogmatics encloses an "anthropology" and an "ontology" of man based on God's own declaration about himself. The Word of God compels us to say that "we know the cosmos only through its relation to man", but this does not mean that "its life is necessarily exhausted in this relation".¹¹ But theologische Anthropologie has no right to become Kosmologie. Barth's insistence here that man is the object of God's purpose for the cosmos, and most importantly "in which this purpose is revealed", makes him at once reject the notion that man constitutes the world or even "a microcosm" of it ("for he is far too insignificant to be understood as the measure and epitome of all things"),¹² but also to indicate what we cannot say about the cosmos. Quite simply "the Word of God is silent on this point". Whilst we can, and should, affirm that man is the centre of God's revealing purpose, we cannot by implication affirm or deny such things concerning the cosmos or any part of it. We simply do not know. This does not mean that Barth regards any such enquiries or speculations of this kind as "strictly forbidden". But from the standpoint of the Word of God they can never be "more than exercises in pious surmise or imagination".¹³ It has become clear that man is "made an object of theological knowledge" by virtue of his relationship to God which "is revealed to us in the Word of God".¹⁴ Theology may only give "a dim and blurred reflection" of this divine light "but this does not affect in the least the uniqueness, the height and depth, the richness of the material which it tries to use for better or for worse".¹⁵ But how does theological anthropology

10. CD, III, 2, p. 12.

11. CD, III, 2, p. 15.

12. CD, III, 2, p. 16.

13. CD, III, 2, p. 17.

14. CD, III, 2, p. 19.

15. CD, III, 2, p. 20.

stand in relation to all other anthropology? Can theology orientate itself by any anthropology independent of its own claims and insights? Can we learn from its methods and results? Should we regard theologische Anthropologie "merely as a species", that is, as one of many attempts at human understanding, all of which have some part in a collective picture of man? Barth acknowledges that non-theological anthropology dominates the scene with rival and often comprehensive claims. He attempts an analysis of two distinct forms of anthropology each of which require a different attitude.

The first type considered is that of "the speculative theory of man" often resting upon a "pure self-intuition purporting to be axiomatic". From this starting point hypotheses are mounted and defended. This kind of anthropology Barth readily dismisses. It rests upon an over-confidence in man's own abilities. "He thinks that in some way he can know himself" argues Barth. It may be that this form of anthropology includes or excludes the idea of God but in either case the method is that man himself becomes "both the pupil and teacher of truth". Here is an "enemy" of theological anthropology.¹⁶

The second type is that of the "exact science of man". Here man is also the object of knowledge but one formulated by physiological, biological, psychological or sociological hypotheses. "These sciences", maintains Barth, "have at their disposal in every period temporarily authoritative formulae which sum up the results of previous research and which indicate hypotheses and pointers for future research".¹⁷ To the extent that they remain scientific, they will refrain from formulating hypotheses into axioms and dogmas. Since they are concerned "not with the being of man but the appearance; not with the inner but the outer; not with the totality but with the sum of

16. CD, III, 2, p. 22.

17. CD, III, 2, p. 23.

specific and partial phenomena". they should resist the claim that their particular conclusions form the "basis and criterion for all other investigation and knowledge". A different attitude is required to this form of anthropology. Like other forms of human activity ("eating, drinking and sleeping and all other human activities, techniques and achievements") it does not "prejudice" the hearing of the Word of God.¹⁸ It only does so if it dogmatizes its (necessarily temporary) conclusions.

In contrast theologische Anthropologie has to do not "merely with man as a phenomenon but with man himself". Its concern is to proclaim the truth about man in the light of God's Word. This claim for truth is a responsibility of dogmatics but that in turn "does not mean that it cannot err, that it does not need continually to correct and improve itself."¹⁹ But we see the inappropriateness of non-theological anthropology when we consider how it might be possible for it to understand man as a creature of God. Theological anthropology based on the Word of God judges us in marked contrast to other approaches. For "the revelation of God does not show us man as we wish to see him" but rather creatureliness "in its perversion and corruption".²⁰

Barth ponders the mystery of how it may be possible on one hand to posit (as we should) the "total and radical corruption of human nature", and yet on the other hand to affirm that human nature "as constituted by God is reasonable and necessary". The only answer is to be found where at first sight it appears most "impenetrable". For "it is the Word of God which sets us this problem",²¹ he argues. This is not only because the Word itself shows us the depravity of human nature, but because it also reveals what is

18. CD, III, 2, p. 24.

19. CD, III, 2, p. 25.

20. CD, III, 2, p. 26.

21. CD, III, 2, p. 29.

necessarily hidden, namely man's true nature. This knowledge cannot be grasped by our own power of reasoning nor by inference "from any residual lineaments in the biblical picture of sinful man" to what the true essence of created man might be. Rather "knowledge of sin and of human nature" are only possible "in their interconnexion within the comprehensive knowledge of the Word of God".²²

Barth has now reached the point where he can state his main thesis of this section: "As the man Jesus is Himself the revealing Word of God, He is the source of our knowledge of the nature of man as created by God".²³ Since the Word is the centre and goal of all theology we are able to perceive both the nature of sin and God's awesome grace. God shows us both the gravity of sin and the possibility of atonement. Thus Barth can write of "the nature of the man Jesus" as the "key to the problem of human nature". In short: "This man is man". Theological enquiry must therefore seek an answer to this question: "What is the creaturely nature of man to the extent that, looking to the revealed grace of God and concretely to the man Jesus, we can see in it a continuum unbroken by sin, an essence which even sin does not and cannot change?"²⁴

Before proceeding to discuss relevant parts of this section, it is worth reminding ourselves of the surprisingly tentative nature of Barth's intentions as revealed by his Preface. He begins by indicating that the publication of this volume had not appeared as planned. The "inward cause" was that the theme required "a constant collecting, assessing and shaping of the material before I dared publish the results".²⁵ In addition Barth is still questioning whether all the material relevant to the doctrine of man has been fully treated. "In a first draft", he writes, "I had a section on 'Man and

22. CD, III, 2, p. 31.

23. CD, III, 2, p. 41.

24. CD, III, 2, p. 43.

25. CD, III, 2, p. ix (Preface).

Humanity' in which I dealt with the individual, societies and society, but I later dropped this because I was not sure enough of the theological approach to this problem and therefore of the right way to treat it". Moreover in a crucial line, Barth indicates that much of his treatment of cosmology may be in need of subsequent revision by others. "I also think it conceivable", he writes, "that, in spite of the counter-arguments adduced, the limits of the term 'creature' may with the necessary boldness and sobriety be more widely drawn than I have dared attempt". Thus further work may take up the arguments presented "in relation to other things which may be missed or censured".²⁶ Such generous statements go beyond the characteristic reserve of Barth in presenting each new successive volume for consideration. At this telling point, namely in his definition of "the creature", on which so much in his discussion hangs, he is prepared to countenance bold revision.

Kerygma without Kosmologie?

The major thrust of Barth's argument in this first sub-section is that "in practice the doctrine of creation means anthropology - the doctrine of man". The startling nature of this thesis is not lost on Barth. But qualifications aside, he finds support in "the overwhelming consensus of dogmatic tradition".²⁷ Until the eighteenth century it was usual to speak first of angels and then of man but no specific cosmology was supposed by this. There was not even encouragement "from the curious account of the sixth day of creation (Gen. 1:24 - 31), or a passage like Mk. 1:13, to set alongside the doctrine of man at least a doctrine of the animal creation".²⁸ Even when reliable information about the nature of the earth became available from the Middle Ages onwards, only in one case, namely Polanus in his Syntagma Theologiae of 1609 do we find cosmology interfused with theology. Only the Dutch Neo-Calvinists of the nineteenth century, as exemplified by Abraham Kuyper's

26. CD, III, 2, p. x (Preface); my italics.

27. CD, III, 2, p. 6.

28. CD, III, 2, p. 5.

Dictaten Dogmatiek of 1910, or later, Arthur Titius' Natur und Gott of 1926, or Horst Stephan's Glaubenslehre of 1928, do we reach anything like a serious attempt at theological cosmology and that invariably in fragmented and inconsistent forms. Barth is emphatic:

The inner justification of this tradition, and the inner necessity of following it, are to be found in the fact that by the nature of its object dogmatics has neither the occasion nor the duty to become a technical cosmology (Kosmologie) or a Christian world-view (Weltanschauung) ... Its true object is the revealed, written and declared Word of God. Those who have claimed to have a world-view ... have always derived it from other sources than the Word of God. Here at the outset we part company with the exponents of all world-views. This is imposed upon us negatively by the fact that the Word of God does not contain any account of the cosmos; any ontology of the created reality. The Word of God is concerned with God and man.²⁹

Barth is baffling at this point. There are four major areas of difficulty. Firstly, definition. Barth again does not define what he understands by "world-view" or "cosmology".³⁰ The consistent assumption throughout is that world-views must be secular, alien and foreign. In this sense they must necessarily be opposed or indifferent to dogmatics. Moreover this lack of definition allows him to exclude by implication any statement about the nature of the world generally and non-human living beings within it. Secondly, consistency. The unfortunate inconsistency is that Barth unwittingly devastates the edifice of Part One which sought to offer a doctrine of created being, human, animal and vegetable. But even within the first ten pages of Part Two the tension is clear. Thus he writes (page 4): "It has often been missed and has always had to be rediscovered that the Word of God in its ultimate and decisive form in the New Testament has a 'cosmic' character to the extent that its message of salvation relates to the man who is rooted in the cosmos, and who is found and renewed by his Creator at the heart of the cosmos", whereas later (page 6) he writes: "The Word of

29. CD, III, 2, p. 6; my italics.

30. See pp. 118-120 for previous discussion of these words.

God is concerned with God and man". Thus Barth actually advances his case by limiting what he previously accepted as the New Testament witness concerning cosmology. Thirdly, and inevitably, the biblical witness. For if Barth is right that the biblical witness holds fast to the cosmological dimension of man in the universe, how can he simply sweep this witness away at this point? In footnote commentary, he makes what from his standpoint is a vexing (some would say tenuous) distinction between "the true content" of the biblical message and its clothing in the "cosmology of its time",³¹ but even if such a distinction is possible, it surely requires argument and further elaboration. If all world-views, that is perspectives on the world, theocentric or otherwise, are to be disregarded at this point, how are we to understand the importance which Barth attached to the Genesis sagas themselves and which form the largest part of his substantive work in Part One? Is there not a view of the world, its character, order and design disclosed within these sagas however variously they may be interpreted? Is there not here something closely resembling an "ontology of heaven and earth" which Barth now denies? "When, however, the writings of the New Testament are interpreted without reference to the fact that the whole of their message concerns the restoration of Creation", writes Wingren, "and where the early Christian kerygma is interpreted without being related to mankind's prehistory in Genesis, this New Testament kerygma changes its meaning and loses part of its substance".³² Fourthly, and most importantly, Barth's view is theologically strained in the form in which he presents it. It simply cannot be true that the revealed Word of God "does not contain any account of the cosmos". The difficulty may be grasped immediately once it is appreciated that the Word incarnate is the same Word through whom all things come to be and

31. CD, III, 2, p. 8.

32. Wingren, op. cit., p. 191. He inveighs against the isolating of the kerygma from its Old Testament roots. It is perhaps ironical that Barth, one of the theologians who provides an exhaustive discussion of the Genesis sagas, should fail to make more of the restoration theme. Where, for example, is his discussion of the messianic hope for all creation?

through whom, with the Father, all is loved and sustained. "For the Word spread himself everywhere", writes Athanasius, "above and below and in the depth and in the breadth, in the world".³³ Because of this fundamental relationship it must logically be possible to offer an account of the Word and the world. This is not to suppose a detailed geophysical description of each and every part and particle of the creation. It is not to suppose that every detail of human or animal life must be presupposed by the establishing of this relationship and connection. But the logic of Barth's position, as we have seen, moves from the confession of Jesus Christ as God incarnate to the necessity of the confession of God as Creator. The one, Barth holds, is inseparable from the other. Moreover, this is a confession of God as Creator of heaven and earth, that is, all created reality distinct from himself. Of course Barth is right to hold that the biblical witness to the Word places man in a central position, indeed a unique one. But to affirm that "in practice the doctrine of creation means anthropology" must be to give up on the fullness of Christian confession. "In practice" it means that the doctrine of creation (anything in the created order apart from man) is cosmology and therefore "essentially foreign".³⁴

Barth's approach is all the more surprising because on one hand he sees the dangers involved in it and on the other hand his positive thesis in no way requires it:

33. Athanasius, op. cit., p. 19.

34. Barth completely ignores the strong patristic evidence in favour of a cosmos-embracing doctrine of redemption, see esp. 'Christ the Victor and the Doctrine of the Recapitulatio', Ch. 3 of H.E.W. Turner's The Patristic Doctrine of Redemption: A Study of the Development of Doctrine during the First Five Centuries (London: A.R. Mowbray & Co., 1952) pp. 47 - 69; also Gustaf Aulen's classic defence of Irenaeus in particular, Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of the Atonement, ET by A.G. Herbert (London: SPCK, 1931) pp. 20 - 51. The vital point is not, of course, whether we accept Irenaeus's view of what was overcome through the act of reconciliation but his insistence that the work of reconciliation extends to all things.

Because man, living under heaven and on earth, is the creature whose relation to God is revealed to us in the Word of God, he is the central object of the theological doctrine of creation.³⁵

As a positive statement this is unexceptional. It must follow from the incarnation that man is centrally important. But this theologische Anthropologie does not necessarily have to exclude a doctrine of the non-human. It is difficult to avoid the judgement that Barth here is caught in such a dialectical method that he is bound to over-draw, even exaggerate, his position. Perhaps he is simply misled by the often secular meaning of cosmology. Perhaps his "no" at this point is meant only as a preliminary warning against the all too widespread supposition that theological anthropology can be broadened out to include strictly non-theological elements. But in the end we must judge Barth by his own declared intentions: "In this present exposition we must not and will not be guilty of any failure to appreciate the significance of the cosmos, of any insulating of man from the realm of the non-human creation".³⁶ In response we can only ask where in this chapter volume or elsewhere in the Dogmatics, is the necessary consideration of man's relations with the non-human which would acquit him of the charge to which he pleads innocent?

There are a number of points in Barth's development of this theme that we need to confront directly.

1. "The Church and its leaders constantly found themselves in the presence of ways of regarding the world. They shared in the decay of old and the rise of new conceptions of this kind. They took part in these changes either eagerly or reluctantly, but usually without any great interest and concern ... But in this matter they were never and nowhere creative."³⁷ Barth's

35. CD, III, 2, p. 3.

36. CD, III, 2, p. 4.

37. CD, III, 2, p. 7.

point on the face of it is obvious and convincing. But it oddly misses the prior point that the confession of God the Creator was the necessary background to the engagement or rejection of secular or neutral cosmologies. The issue is not whether the Church and its leaders developed in turn their own distinctive and detailed cosmology, dependent upon or independent of others, but whether the confession of God the Creator of all things necessarily supposed a view of the world as belonging to him and made for his purposes. Again our criticism of Barth is not that he does not entertain many of the exciting and currently feasible cosmologies on offer, but that he fails to see that the confession of the Word incarnate is implicitly a cosmological view. Torrance brings this out by refining further the "Nicene conception of space" developed by Athanasius. The key is the relation of homousios to the creation; the Word holds and contains all created being "binding it into such a relation to God that it is preserved from breaking up into nothingness or dropping out of existence, while at the same time imparting to it light and rationality". Therefore "statements about acts of God in the Incarnation imply and demand statements about the creation of the universe and the unique relation in which as Self-existent Being the Creator stands to the creation".³⁸

2. "The reason why there is no revealed or biblical world-view characteristic of and necessary to the Christian kerygma is that faith in the Word of God can never find its theme in the totality of the created world".³⁹ But it does not follow that because the theme of God's relationship with man is central to the Christian confession that all other relationships within

38. Torrance, Space, Time and Incarnation (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978) pp. 14 and 55; my italics. He contrasts the Patristic notion of space "as the seat of relations or the place of meeting and activity in the interaction between God and the world" with the Aristotelian idea of space "as the immobile limit of the containing body" (pp.24/5).

39. CD, III, 2, p. 8.

creation are insignificant to this one prior relationship. Barth resists one early strand within the kerygma which sees the work of Christ as having effected reconciliation of all things in heaven and earth. Is the restoration or fulfilment of all things proclaimed, for example, by Peter (Acts 3:21) as inseparable from the work of Christ to be regarded as transient cosmological wrapping? And is the early Christological hymn in Philippians (2:5-11) with its world embracing theme to be similarly jettisoned?⁴⁰

3. "There is no world outlook which can be described as biblical, or even as Old Testament, or as prophetic or Pauline ... none is expounded as a doctrine, and none is made obligatory for faith ... However serious the proposal to substitute for the affirmations of the Christian Gospel those of regnant world-views, it always happened in fact that the latter were adjusted and transformed, the attempt being made to make them more splendid by additions, more tolerable by subtractions, and more meaningful by involutions".⁴¹ Barth is at least half right here. The facile identification of various cosmologies as necessary or as an adjunct to Christian faith is a cautionary tale that needs to be heeded. But he does not ponder why it is that cosmological thinking, theologically inspired or otherwise, has nevertheless held such an attraction for Christian followers. The reason I suggest is not difficult to find. It lies in the continued and continuing attempt to relate the world as defined by the Word to the world as defined in each age by the

40. Barth's own exegesis severely limits what some might argue is the central thrust of this hymn, namely that the praise of Christ resounds throughout all creation (v. 11). He interprets it as saying that "God may be worshipped by every creature which, having been created in God's image, can worship God, needs reconciliation with God and is capable of it", The Epistle to the Philippians, ET by James W. Leitch (London: SCM Press, 1962) p. 68; my italics. Cf. Gunther Bornkamm: "One cannot emphasize too much ... that this event of enthronement concerns the world and not only or even primarily the congregation. Thus 'Kyrios' does not mean Jesus' honoured position in cultic worship ... but the cosmic ruler", Early Christian Experience, ET by P.L. Hammer, The New Testament Library (London: SCM Press, 1969) pp. 117/8.

41. CD, III, 2, n. p. 9.

presuppositions of culture.⁴² Of course in this attempt there has been reckless compromise, periodical success and, more often, frequent failure. But it would be a mistake to assume that the attempt at this connection has always been extrinsic to the kerygma and necessarily a betrayal of it. Indeed Allan Galloway strongly argues that the doctrine of cosmic redemption "was the very heart of the primitive Gospel".⁴³ One further point may perhaps be risked. Against Barth's optimistic view that the confession of faith has retained its integrity and meaning despite its alien cosmological assailants, it could perhaps be posited that it is precisely because Christian faith has largely failed to develop a view of the world which is consonant with its faith in the revealed Word, that the very possibility of a secular world without God, and especially God incarnate, has become a cultural reality. Once the cosmological wrapping of a supernatural God who acts, and works and intervenes in and on the world is abandoned because the world is 'not really like that' the incarnation as well as the cosmos becomes unintelligible. "Are we sure", asks Maurice Wiles, "that the concept of an incarnate being, one that is fully God and fully man, is after all an intelligible concept?"⁴⁴

42. A point well developed by C.N. Cochrane who argues that the early church claimed to possess in the Logos "a principle of understanding superior to anything existing in the classical world". Therefore "To accept this faith was to believe that, however obscure this might appear to the scientific intelligence, the esse of the Father embraced within itself the elements of order and movement and that these were not less integral than substance to the divine nature. It was, moreover, to hold that on these essential constituents of the Deity depended the structure and purpose of the universe", Christianity and Classical Culture: A Study of Thought and Action from Augustus to Augustine (London: Oxford University Press, 1944) pp. vi and 238; my italics; see also W.A. Whitehouse's Order, Goodness, Glory (London: Oxford University Press, 1960) pp. 1 - 26.

43. Galloway, The Cosmic Christ (London: Nisbet & Sons, 1951) p. x; my italics. He convincingly argues that much of the cosmic imagery of the New Testament was designed to "symbolise all the distortion in the structure of existence" on one hand, and to assert "that the work of Christ is universally effective for all creation" on the other. The doctrine of the cosmic Christ "arose as a necessary implication of the fundamental insights of Jewish and Christian theology" (pp. 28, 49, 55).

44. Wiles, 'Christianity without Incarnation' in The Myth of God Incarnate, ed. by John Hick (London: SCM Press, 1977) p. 5; my italics.

4. "Even where (in certain types of thought among certain Christians and movements) we think we detect an absolute union of faith with this or that world-view, we are not really dealing with faith at all, but with a partial deviation from faith such as is always possible in the life of the Church and of individuals."⁴⁵ Barth is again at least half right here. It is quite possible that individuals or movements within the Church can compromise or weaken their faith through uncritical, or even critical, engagement with contemporary world-views. But the rest is question-begging. Of course compromise with "alien" world-views must be rejected, but that is not in dispute. What must be questioned is whether this right rejection of secular cosmology should also lead us to the view that the doctrine of creation must in practice solely confine itself to anthropology. A counter-question should therefore be posed: is the Church not free to make sense of the created order (the cosmos) in the light of its conviction concerning the Word made flesh who is also the Word through whom all things come to be? It is hard to see why this question should present such difficulty for Barth. For what follows in Part Two is precisely this kind of doctrinal development with man as its object, coherently argued and systematically presented, controlled at each point in relation to the perceived centre of understanding. Barth is keen throughout his work to maintain the relationship between Christian confession and human culture. "In understanding Jesus Christ, the Word, the logos made flesh ... Barth opens the private language of the church to a relationship with culture."⁴⁶ Frequently he refers to maladroit theological claims that have adversely affected our understanding of ourselves within society and led to false social developments (see, e.g., his discussion of Marxism pp. 258 - 9). From this perspective, we must not be deflected from our task of judging, illuminating and assessing our relationship to the world in the light of the purposes of God disclosed in Jesus Christ. One recent

45. CD, III, 2, n. p. 9.

46. McLean, Humanity in the Thought of Karl Barth, op. cit., p. 59,

writer perceives that the Christian tradition has failed to oppose the "rigid philosophical and theological dualisms operating in western thought, and the current social, technological and environmental crises which are to a considerable extent the consequences of those dualisms" because of the absence of a unifying vision of the world as exemplified in the logos doctrine. "(I)t is especially incumbent upon Christianity ... to seek at its roots a vision and ethic to help overcome the crises which it has done so much, both passively and actively, to perpetuate".⁴⁷

The Word and the Intelligibility of the World

One further and inevitable question arises: Does Barth actually jettison the doctrine of creation altogether? At first sight it may appear so. But subsequent argument introduces a number of significant qualifications. In the first place, Barth returns to his theme of the "indissoluble connection" between creation and covenant,⁴⁸ and that the created world is a "prototype and pattern of that for which he (man) is addressed by the Word of God". The doctrine of creation then, as expounded, certainly includes the earth but must "confine itself within ... limits". Theological doctrine is "anthropocentric" in the sense that "it follows the orientation prescribed by the Word of God; the orientation on man".⁴⁹ I shall not repeat the difficulties with this view, except to point out that even this heavily anthropocentric structure does not necessarily preclude a full statement of the non-human. The Word can be viewed as orientated for man, and through man, for all creation. We need to distinguish between "anthropocentricity" - that is orientation centrally on man, and "anthropocentrism" - that is exclusive orientation on man. Secondly, the problem concerning the limits of theological knowledge:

47. Casey Bailey, 'Cosmotheandricism: A Unitive Vision and Environmental Ethic for Survival', CTNS Bulletin, The Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences, Berkeley, California, 4, 3 (1984) p. 10.

48. CD, III, 2, p. 11.

49. CD, III, 2, p. 12.

But we do not know (wir wissen nicht) how the lordship and praise of God are exercised in the cosmos around us. We do not know this even from the Word of God. The Word of God is silent on this point.⁵⁰

The issue is serious and merits attention. It is certainly true that much in the created order, its specific pattern, design and function, is beyond immediate theological explanation. We cannot know specifically how the Spirit relates to all parts of creation and how their inner workings co-operate with in the general beneficence of God. The same, however, must also be said of many human phenomena. Within particular circumstances we may be unable to render much of human life specifically intelligible. Beyond the fact that such-and-such is possible we may have to be agnostic as to the finer details. We may be questioning, incredulous, perplexed or baffled but we cannot draw from the fact of unknowing some human gnosis that would enable us to declare emphatically in the negative. The limit to theological knowledge of creation is indubitably a complex question and a real one. But the argument from relative silence would appear more convincing if Barth had taken up at earlier points some of the real possibilities concerning man's relationship with the non-human as the biblical witness developed them. For Barth may be right that outside the covenant relationship the place and purpose of living beings are impossible to render intelligible. But included within the covenant relationship at least a major part of the non-human creation can be viewed from another light.

The puzzling feature of the concluding part of this section is that Barth does appear to grasp this point, only subsequently to lose it again:

Hence in the disclosed relationship of God with man there is disclosed also His relationship with the universe ... This does not rest on a world-view ... It is man in covenant with God who reveals this plan. He does so representatively for the whole cosmos ... He alone sheds light on the cosmos ... As God's covenant with him (man) is disclosed, the cosmos is shown to be embraced by the same covenant.⁵¹

50. CD, III, 2, p. 17; my italics.

51. CD, III, 2, pp. 18/9; my italics.

The logic of Barth's conclusion moves away from the position even of relative silence which he advanced earlier. For if man's relationship to God discloses the purpose of the universe it is inconceivable that some account cannot be given of it. If man actually represents the divine purpose for the cosmos, or if his own covenant relationship embraces the cosmos, it must be impossible to offer a theologische Anthropologie that does not describe this fundamental aspect. Far from the doctrine of creation meaning in practice anthropology, the precise reverse must be true. The doctrine of man must imply a working doctrine of creation.

Barth, alas, does not see this. He concludes that it is "legitimate" that "we concern ourselves with anthropology alone" - one that does not in fact reveal any specific purposes for creation. Thus he compounds the difficulty by beginning his second sub-section by stating what is plainly inconsistent:

Man is made an object of theological knowledge by the fact that his relationship to God is revealed to us in the Word of God. We have seen it is this which distinguishes man from the rest of the cosmos.⁵²

In fact what distinguishes man from the cosmos is not that God's purpose is uniquely disclosed in him for himself, but for the whole cosmos, as previously accepted. In man, as previously defined, we have no alternative but to reckon with a disclosure of meaning for the entire cosmos.

ab6 Barth's overall thesis of the second sub-section, namely that "As the man Jesus is Himself the revealing Word of God, He is the source of our knowledge of the nature of man as created by God"⁵³ is, as positive thesis and explanation, theologically unexceptional. It is not the positive assertion but the negative implications which are difficult to follow. For Barth proceeds by contrasting the specific and definite knowledge of man from the general and wholly unspecified knowledge of creation that can be gleaned

52. CD, III, 2, p. 19; my italics.

53. CD, III, 2, p. 41.

from the incarnation. In one sense of course he must be right, that is, it must follow that man is most centrally revealed by the incarnation. But it does not follow that real knowledge of creatureliness, of man's relationship to other creatures and nature itself, cannot be deduced from God's self-disclosure. Barth does not grapple at this point with the long tradition of theology spearheaded by Irenaeus and particularly strong in Eastern theology which insists upon the relationship between Christ and creation as a whole. Notice the emphases in this well-known passage of Irenaeus:

For the Creator of the world is truly the Word of God: and this is our Lord, who in the last times was made man, existing in this world, and who in an invisible manner contains all things created, and is inherent in the entire creation, since the Word of God governs and arranges all things; and therefore He came to his own in a visible manner, and was made flesh, and hung upon the tree, that He might sum up all things in Himself.⁵⁴

It is our very God, in other words, the actual Creator of this vast and mysterious universe, who pledges himself to the very materiality of existence through the incarnation and therefore raises all existence into union and fellowship with him. "Thus the world's essential goodness as the creature of God is confirmed and enhanced by its redemption through the incarnate Logos", writes Richard Norris in commentary, "and so far is the world from being alien from its Creator that it becomes in man the recipient of an immortal kind of life".⁵⁵ In this way the redemption of man is seen not as opposed to, but as the prerequisite of, the redemption of all creation.

Ironically because Barth is not able to confess any knowledge of the created world as revealed by the incarnation, he opens up the very possibility of a

54. Irenaeus of Lyons, 'Against Heresies' in The Writings of Irenaeus, 2 vols., ET by A. Roberts and W.H. Rambaut, Ante-Nicene Christian Library (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, n.d.) Vol. II, V, 18, 3, pp. 105/6; my italics.

55. Norris, God and World in Early Christian Theology: A Study in Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian and Origen, Studies in Patristic Thought (London: A and C Black, 1966) p. 74; his italics.

secular world, that is a world divorced from the saving activity of God and largely unintelligible from that light. Thus it could be that Barth allows too much for the "exact science of man" which he claims does not stand in opposition to the insights of the Gospel. For whilst such enquiry must be careful not to dogmatise on the basis of its results (and thus render itself theologically unacceptable), it cannot escape our attention that scientific explanations of nature, and particularly creatures within it, largely dominate our contemporary understanding of the world. Whilst the doctrine of man may be safeguarded by Barth's insistence upon a centre of theological knowledge in this respect, the doctrine of non-human creation is in no such way safeguarded. Thus scientific enquiry, and more often than not the presumptions of the same, have come to dominate our understanding of the cosmos in which we live.⁵⁶ Doctrine is therefore practically reduced to a gnosis of man separated and insulated from the otherwise explained natural world. To summarise, the issue is not whether man is rendered intelligible by the Word but whether the world in which the Word is revealed is also made intelligible.

Jesus as Man within the Cosmos

The next major section is entitled 'Man As The Creature of God' and its first sub-section 'Jesus, Man for God'. "In this section", begins Barth, "we ask concerning the outline and form of our object, its character and limits, and therefore the special characteristics by which it is distinguished from other objects". Who or what do we mean by 'man'? More particularly, who and what is 'man in the cosmos'? If we look to the man Jesus we see that

56. Owen Chadwick defines secularisation in the way laid down by Lübbe as "the relation (whatever that is, which can only be known by historical enquiry) in which modern European civilization and society stands to the Christian elements of its past and the continuing elements of its present", Säkularisierung (Freiburg, 1965) p. 86, cited in The Secularisation of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century (Cambridge: University Press, 1975) p. 264. In this sense there can be little doubt that our view of the world, and nature especially, has been progressively and successfully secularised. The discontinuity consists in the "self-enclosed positions" which result from the "withdrawal of natural sciences from theology", Hardy, 'The Dynamics of Creation', op. cit., pp. 1-3.

scripture presents him as a man living in historical space and time "through a series of conditions, actions, experiences, in the recurrence and confirmation of its identity through all these active modifications of its being".⁵⁷

But who is this Jesus?

First of all, he is "wholly and utterly the Bearer of an office".⁵⁸ It is impossible to conceive of him except in terms of the office bestowed upon him. There is no contradiction between the two: his office and his humanity are one. This is because the humanity of Jesus is most appropriately described in terms of work. When the Evangelists describe him in terms of Prophet, Priest and King it is clear that they have his saving work in mind. Barth insists that Jesus' humanity and his saving work constitute together Real Man (der wirkliche Mensch). There is no abstract Jesus: "not a neutral humanity in which He might have had quite a different history; not a humanity which we can seek and analyse in abstraction from or otherwise than His work".⁵⁹

Barth now reaches his "decisive point". The New Testament witness is united in seeing in the work of Jesus nothing less than the work of God himself. "We cannot say that Jesus did not act in His own right, but in the name of another, namely God". Whilst the same may be said of prophets and apostles, what distinguishes Jesus is the way in which his own cause and that of God become one. "God acts as Jesus acts", maintains Barth.⁶⁰ It is in being one in his divinity with the Father, in his work and activity, that Jesus "is Himself, this man".⁶¹

Barth now stands back a little to recapitulate. Who and what is man within

57. CD, III, 2, p. 55.

58. CD, III, 2, p. 56.

59. CD, III, 2, p. 59.

60. CD, III, 2, p. 62.

61. CD, III, 2, p. 64.

the cosmos? Six points are made. The first and major is that man is the only one among the creatures who must "recognise at once the identity of God with Himself". We can say here what can only be "problematical" of all other creatures, namely, "with the existence of this man we immediately encounter that of God also". Secondly, Barth makes this point more precisely and in a way that is central to his whole theology. For as God wills and works in this man, he works and wills "for each and every man".⁶² He is the Saviour of man. Jesus makes actual in his person and work the forbearing, providential activity of God. Thus God's presence in Jesus is "not just a fact but an act". Thirdly, God wills this as an act of his own sovereign freedom. God is free in his sovereignty, to choose freely as he wills. "His deliverance is always the act of his freedom", maintains Barth. Fourthly, this sovereign act of God encompasses man. "Man, this man, exists as such in the enactment of this history, in the fulfilment of the divine act of lordship which takes place in it".⁶³ Hence man exists within the sovereign fiat of God. In Jesus are not juxtaposed two kinds of being, one human, one divine, but rather one inclusive divine reality "in which as such the human is posited, contained and included". Fifthly, precisely because of this inclusive divine and human reality (what Barth understands as the significance of the doctrine of the anhypostasia⁶⁴) it must follow that the creature is perfectly open to the divine will and "the divine deliverance enacted in it".⁶⁵ The creature is not just "the locus" or "the form" of this deliverance for other creatures. Neither does God simply utilise this creature in his plan for the salvation of man.

62. CD, III, 2, p. 68.

63. CD, III, 2, p. 69.

64. CD, III, 2, n. p. 70. Barth does not ask himself the question which is begged by this notion, namely is there such a thing as distinctly human substance?

65. CD, III, 2, p. 70.

Rather the closest possible identification must be made between this man and God if we are to understand Jesus as the Word of God.⁶⁶ Finally, Barth sums up the distinctive importance of Jesus in the fact that he "is for God". This means that this creature "is for the divine deliverance and therefore for God's own glory, for the freedom of God and therefore for the love of God".⁶⁷ What radically distinguishes this man from all other creatures is that he is wholly and completely for God. What we see in Jesus is the "purpose and presence and revelation of God actualised in His (own) life" and becoming "His own purpose". Therefore Barth speaks of human life as "identical" with this telos .

Man Juxtaposed with Creation

This is a good moment to pause and consider more precisely the distinctly human incarnational logic of his thesis developed here. We need to remember that Barth's concern is "who and what is man within the cosmos?" and this "first in relation to the man Jesus".⁶⁸ From this he hopes to establish the "distinctive characteristics" of man over and against other creatures. Here is a summary of the stages of his argument in propositional form:

Stage One: In this man (Jesus) we recognise the identity of the one who is identical with God.

66. In the light of this, we can only bewail the thought of commentators like John Macquarrie, who argue that Barth "in his most typical utterances, regards God as wholly other to man". It is true that some allowance is made for the change of thought as represented by Barth's The Humanity of God, ET by J.N. Thomas and T. Wieser, Fontana Library of Theology and Philosophy, 2nd ed. (London: Collins, 1971) esp. pp. 240ff., but the following anecdote surely represents a libel at least on CD, III, 2: "When in the nineteen-sixties some American theologians revived Nietzsche's proclamation of the death of God and believed that they could construct a Christian theology of God, it was noted that they had all been at one time devotees of the theology of Karl Barth. The connection was made clear by the statement of one of them, William Hamilton: 'It is a very short step but a critical one, to move from the otherness of God to his absence'', The New Essence of Christianity (Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966) p. 55, cited in Macquarrie's In Search of Humanity: A Theological and Philosophical Approach (London: SCM Press, 1982) p. 255 and 254 above; my italics.

67. CD, III, 2, p. 70.

68. CD, III, 2, p. 68.

Stage Two: The relationship (therefore) between God and this man cannot be indifferent. As God wills and works through this man he works and wills for all men everywhere.

Stage Three: God's sovereignty is not compromised by this identity, indeed it is the act of God's freedom. (Therefore) it is the freedom as well as the love of God which distinguishes this man.

Stage Four: This man therefore exists within the lordship of God. Therefore there are not two realities (human and divine) but one reality in which both are posited and included.

Stage Five: (Therefore) this man is no mere channel of God's activity; it cannot be neutral or indifferent. Because God dwells within this creature, we can know that God is active within him.

Stage Six: This creature is for God: for divine deliverance, purpose, love and glory.

We now see immediately the circularity of Barth's thesis. Once the pre-supposition is granted, namely that in him (Jesus) we have to reckon with the one who is identical with God, everything else follows. But it is not just the circularity that is disconcerting, but the way in which the human creature is seemingly abstracted from the reality of the created world. For what is striking is that it is precisely not what Barth claims for it, namely "man within the cosmos". A view of human life and nature is pre-supposed that is independent of the creaturely world and the cosmos in general. The problem can best be approached by asking: What or who is assumed in the incarnation? Of course human nature is so assumed. But this nature is at the same time the nature of the creature, of creatureliness and of creaturehood. St. John of the Cross emphasises how "in uniting Himself with man He united himself with

the nature of them all ... in this lifting up of the Incarnation of his Son, and in the glory of His resurrection according to the flesh, not only did the Father beautify the creatures in part, but we can say that he left them all clothed with beauty and dignity".⁶⁹ We need to remember that on Barth's view so far it is not the specialness of human nature per se, but the divine attitude towards it that makes it special. If this is the case, what must also be presupposed in the incarnation is God's especial relations with all creaturely being. There is no special man elected within the God-head, but only man, the creature, with whom God so elects to have special relations. On this question turns the whole possibility of the incarnation being the key to the meaning of all creaturely being. If the creaturely life taken up into the life of God and thereby made one inclusive reality with him, is not the same creaturely reality that pervades all creaturely being, human and animal, then there can be no genuine point of correspondence, or of course of redemption, for either.⁷⁰

If, therefore, the man identical with God is not only the same being identical with human nature but all creaturely nature, and moreover if this being has the same creaturely nature as exhibited by all God's creatures because of their creatureliness, then all the subsequent stages of Barth's argument are in need of revision. In stage one the fact of identity between God and man in the incarnation is stressed which means that "with the existence of

69. St. John of the Cross, The Complete Works, ed. and ET by A.E. Peers, 3 vols. in one ed. (Wheathampstead, Hertfordshire: Anthony Clarke, 1974) Vol. II, V, p. 49. The sheer profundity of St. John's vision is expressed in this line: "To behold them and find them very good (all creatures) was to make them very good in the Word, His Son", p. 48. The Word beautifies all creatures "communicating to them supernatural being", p. 49.

70. Barth writes elsewhere: "Nothing in true human nature can ever be alien or irrelevant to the Christian ... That means that we can understand true human nature only in the light of the Christian gospel that we believe", Christ and Adam: Man and Humanity in Romans 5, ET by T.A. Smail, Scottish Journal of Theology Occasional Papers, 5 (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1956) p. 43. But if the argument is sound, it must also logically follow that all created nature is relevant and intelligible in terms of the gospel.

this man we immediately encounter that of God also", and therefore "This cannot be said of any other creature". But Barth cannot have it both ways. He cannot on one hand posit that there is no attribute, quality or disposition on man's part that uniquely equips him for incarnation and on the other hand hold that the incarnation is the assumption of a specifically equipped human nature. For in the end, on Barth's view, we do not know what human nature is, nor what creaturely nature is either except through the incarnation.

In stage two we move to the theme that this man is "the Saviour of men ... their unique and total saviour".⁷¹ But the man incarnate is not just one man among other men, but at one and the same time the Logos through whom all things come to be. It is not only that there can be no "quiescent and indifferent" relation between man and the incarnation, but also there can be no such indifference between incarnation and all creaturely being through whom it actually comes to be. The Logos of God cannot be set apart from the world which it has originated and through whom it continues to be. A similar point needs to be made in relation to stage four. Barth rightly sees that God's sovereignty is not compromised in the act of incarnation, that it is an act of God's freedom. But when he continues that only in human history is this divine freedom revealed, he unwittingly separates the divine nature and activity. He speaks of "a story" which can only be understood "a priori, indisputably, and axiomatically, as the divine-human history".⁷² Of course the "story" is about this, but what story could it be concerning a kind of creature so unlike all other kinds of creatures that its telling can only be advanced by placing in contrast and juxtaposition all other kinds of creatures? Barth strongly emphasises that there are not "two juxtaposed realities" in the incarnation, but one fully human and divine reality because "He is as

71. CD, III, 2, p. 68.

72. CD, III, 2, p. 69; my italics.

He is in the Word of God".⁷³ But how does the one relate and belong to the other if the incarnate Word is to be seen as independent and separated from the Word through whom all things come to be? Is there not here an essential and abiding division and contradiction?

In stage five the division is almost complete. "No distinction can be made", writes Barth, "between what this creature is and what it does, between what God does through this creature and what He does in it. For this creature is in the Word of God".⁷⁴ But the creature described here is not a being whose nature is bound up and related to other creaturely determinations and relationships. It has to be asked whether the way in which Barth advances his case by stressing specifically human nature in fact renders all creatures, non-human and even human creatures, strangely redundant. Man that is cut off from his existence in the creaturely world, from his relations within that very world determined by the Word, can only be a shadow of that which the purpose of God intends. This point, in turn, is reinforced by Barth's sixth stage and summary. For he writes how man is by definition "for God" and in this "surpasses all other creatures".⁷⁵ But is not man also made for the world, the cosmos in which he has been placed? Is not man also tied fundamentally to the earthiness of the earth, and is he not placed within it to serve its fruition and completion? Vladimir Lossky, in utter contrast, speaks of how "Man is not a being isolated from the rest of creation, by his very nature he is bound up with the whole of creation". This "cosmic awareness", he argues, "has never been absent from Eastern spirituality ... In his way to union with God, man in no way leaves creatures aside, but gathers together in his love the whole cosmos disordered by sin, that it may

73. CD, III, 2, pp. 69/70.

74. CD, III, 2, p. 70.

75. CD, III, 2, p. 71.

at last be transfigured by grace".⁷⁶ The picture that emerges in Barth, however, is one that is wholly anthromonistic, in the sense that all divine activity and endeavour are concentrated within the sphere of human nature, history and destiny. Of course the man spoken of here by Barth is the man Jesus. It is not human creation per se, but Jesus as the Word that is the centre of God's reconciling purpose. But because of this, it cannot possibly stand as an adequate interpretation that man who is for God is not at one and the same time for God's purposes within creation and his determination to reconcile all things to himself. And this is precisely what we must say of all men because we may say it first of this man, Jesus.

Requirements of Theological Anthropology

The second sub-section of the second major section is entitled 'Phenomena of the Human' (Phänomene des Menschlichen). After outlining his Christology, Barth now proceeds towards a definition of man in general. He reminds his readers that the question of the nature of the man Jesus can only be a basis for anthropology for "anthropology cannot be Christology, nor Christology anthropology".⁷⁷ Between Jesus and ourselves there remains the "mystery" of our own sinfulness and the "mystery" of his identity with God. Because of this "irremovable difference" we cannot simply move from a specific knowledge of Jesus to a specific knowledge of man in general. But we can certainly know who man is indirectly from this process.

But Barth is clear that his Christological outline does allow us "certain criteria". He seeks to indicate these more precisely in relation to the six points previously made. Firstly, if it is true that in the humanity of Jesus we are confronted with the being of God then, despite dissimilarity in certain respects, it must follow that "every man is to be understood, at least mediately and indirectly, to the extent that he is conditioned by the

76. Lossky, The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church, ET by members of the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius (Cambridge and London: James Clarke & Co., 1973) pp. 110 - 111.

77. CD, III, 2, p. 70.

priority of this man, in his relationship with God".⁷⁸ Secondly, it must also follow that each man must also be conditioned by the fact of "divine deliverance enacted in the man Jesus".⁷⁹ Thirdly, it must follow that if the "divine action in favour of each and every man in Him (Jesus)" involves the sovereignty of God himself, it must also follow that the "being of every man ... has its true determination in the glory of God". Fourthly, if it is true that Jesus fulfils the lordship of God and is indeed in this sense truly Lord of the universe, it must follow that he is Lord also of every man and that every man stands under the Lordship of this one man. Fifthly, if the history of Jesus is truly the history of deliverance it must follow that "the being of every man must consist in this history". Each man will have to decide how to respond to the "grace addressed to him" in Jesus, that is, how he will determine his life in accordance with the history of deliverance which confronts him. Finally, if the life and work of Jesus, indeed his whole person and activity, is for God, then it must follow that "if there is the slightest similarity" between his humanity and our own, that "no other man can be understood apart from the fact that his existence too, as an active participation in what God does and means for him, is an event in which he renders God service ... ". Man cannot escape therefore that "his part is for God" simply because "God first willed to bind Himself to man".

Barth now stands back from his enumerated criteria. They are not as yet sufficient for a full concept of man to emerge, but they are nevertheless his appointed limits in which "we shall have to move in our search for a theological concept of man".⁸⁰ They are at the very least "minimal requirements" and they provide us with sufficient guidelines for a critical analysis of other systems.

Barth begins by giving "a general delimitation". No generally descriptive

78. CD, III, 2, p. 70.

79. CD, III, 2, p. 73.

80. CD, III, 2, p. 74.

picture of man fed from accessible and empirical elements within the human phenomena can define real man. "Human self-knowledge" (Selbsterkenntnis), argues Barth, "must be regarded as a vicious circle". For underlying these attempts of man to find himself by his own abilities is the philosophical problem of "who is the man who wants to know himself and thinks he can?"⁸¹ Barth does not deny the possibility of knowledge of genuinely human characteristics, but in the recognition of these traits alone "no-one will discover himself, or what he truly is". People who surmise from the edges of true theological knowledge "are speaking only about knives without edges, or handles without pots, or predicates without subjects".⁸²

Barth maintains that the difficulty inherent in all attempts at human self-knowledge is to be found in the example of man's relationship with animals. For if there is no clear concept of real man, how can one seek to establish his particularity amongst the plethora of earthly species? Man, that has no theological distinction can easily "merge into his environment" possibly being assimilated into it. Whilst there should be no "unbecoming deprecation of any of our fellow-creatures", he is clear that the true distinctiveness of man can only be found in "the history which has its basis in God's attitude to him". If we abandon this theological distinction, we shall forever lose sight of what constitutes true humanness. For we shall end up in the process of isolating such and such a characteristic, to which greater or lesser degree it may to some extent be found in the animal world and to which greater or lesser extent it may correspond with our own ambiguous self-knowledge. "But whether or not they are such symptoms", maintains Barth, "obviously depends on whether we already see and know real man".⁸³

After examining two separate anthropologies, one ethical and another existential, Barth is convinced that he has now dispensed with attempts at "autonomous

81. CD, III, 2, p. 75.

82. CD, III, 2, p. 76.

83. CD, III, 2, p. 78.

self-understanding".⁸⁴ This does not mean that he has rejected these approaches altogether as a means of "human self-examination", or that the level at which these analyses are made may not be acceptable. No one, or collection, of these approaches can alone provide a coherent picture of man. Theological anthropology requires that "the sovereignty in which man claims to know himself is renounced, or rather that it is regarded as relative rather than absolute".⁸⁵ Only from God, as an outside source, can objective knowledge be found. Since only God truly knows what man is, "he must receive and accept the instruction of God" concerning himself. It is only in this context, in his relationship with God, and not as an isolated being, that man can know himself. But this general outline is not itself sufficient. For it might be thought that such an ability to receive divine communication was in some way an "attribute" of man. But such a thought must not be entertained. For God would then "be noetically and ontically immanent as well as transcendent, and its immanence as present as man himself is present". We need, therefore, to recognise that the relationship between man and God cannot be described in terms of mutual co-ordination, but rather in terms of God's declared attitude towards man. And it is this attitude which is revealed under the lordship of God within a specific history. It is this history "in which particular decisions and purposes give rise to action and suffering, speech and hearing, question and answer, on the part of God and then of man".⁸⁶ Knowledge of real man is therefore

84. CD, III, 2, p. 121. Barth rejects the "ethical understanding of man" because "it is at one with the naturalistic in visualising man as a self-contained entity", p. 109. Whilst this may be true of some, even many, is it true of all? Schweitzer's 'reverence for life', for example, is characterised by the need to "show to all will-to-live the same reverence as I do to my own" and therefore avoids many of Barth's strictures, Civilization and Ethics, ET by C.T. Campion, Unwin Books (London: A and C Black, 1967) p. 214. See pp. 271 - 81 for further discussion of Schweitzer.

85. CD, III, 2, p. 122.

86. CD, III, 2, p. 124.

only possible if man reverses his autonomous understanding into a "theonomous self-understanding".⁸⁷ Unless the circle of self-knowledge is broken there can be no way forward to true self-knowledge.

Real Man: Un-real Creature?

At this stage we should examine more closely the "minimum requirements" of theological anthropology expressed in the six "full and sober limits". I shall reproduce in full the first of these as they form part of a repeated pattern:

If it is the case in relation to the man Jesus that in His humanity we are confronted immediately and directly with the being of God, then necessarily, assuming that there is a similarity between Him and us in spite of all dissimilarity, every man is to be understood, at least mediately and indirectly, to the extent that he is conditioned by the priority of this man, in his relationship with God, i.e. in the light of the fact that he comes from God, and above all that God moves to him.⁸⁸

The problem here is knowing how this definition could possibly exclude non-human creatures. If man, the human creature, is to be so understood "at least mediately and indirectly" in relation to Jesus, are not all creatures to be similarly understood? This is not to suggest that they are all specifically determined in the same way. But that all creatures stand under the same and general determination must follow. How could it be otherwise but that the incarnate Logos "through whom all things come to be" necessarily shapes and determines the nature of all creatures that originate with him? Is not the "priority of this man" even more directly relevant to those beings for whom this man holds the key to their theological reason and being? Perhaps it is for this reason that Teilhard de Chardin formulates "three natures in Christ" precisely in order to preserve the insight that "Christ's relation to the cosmos is as real as his relation to the divine Word and to Jesus of Nazareth".⁸⁹

87. CD, III, 2, p. 125.

88. CD, III, 2, p. 73.

89. J.A. Lyons, The Cosmic Christ in Origen and Teilhard de Chardin: A Comparative Study, Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982) p. 217.

The second limitation is that "every man as such must exist and have his being in a history which stands in a clear and recognisable relationship to the divine deliverance enacted in the man Jesus". Insofar as this is true every creature must stand in a "relationship to the divine deliverance". This is not necessarily to suppose that the deliverance of man and other creatures has an identical form, but that both exist in a "recognisable relationship" to it is inescapable. This is not a question, we need to remind ourselves, of human conjecture or opinion, but of theological truth. For it is the Word as Co-creator which is the same Word incarnate who effects the reality of deliverance. All creatures must by virtue of their existence be related to the Logos. Even if it is advanced that non-human creatures stand only secondarily in such a relationship, the point remains. Indeed it could be argued that since the deliverance of all men wrought by this one man is the pre-requisite of the relationship of deliverance for all creation, the relationship is equally if not more significant. In this way "on man, thus redeemed, falls some responsibility for the redemption of all creation".⁹⁰

The third limitation, namely that man "as this history essentially concerns it ... has its true determination in the glory of God (in the very fact that it can participate in that history)" is taken to be a distinguishing mark and therefore the criterion of humanity. But can this be so? Are God's non-human creatures incapable of participating in history? Barth's later definition would appear to be wholly anthropocentric:

The history of a being begins, continues and is completed when something other than itself and transcending its own nature encounters it, approaches it and determines its being in the nature proper to it, so that it is compelled and enabled to transcend itself in response and in relation to this new factor.⁹¹

90. Man in his Living Environment: An Ethical Assessment, Report of a Working Party of the Church Assembly Board for Social Responsibility (London: CIO Publishing, 1970) p. 65. The Report adds the necessary caveat: "This does not make man his own God. It is possible only to man redeemed by God and in the power of God", p. 65.

91. CD, III, 2, p. 158; my italics.

Such a definition, however, does not strictly presuppose only human history in relation to God's intervention and activity. It could be that human activity in relation to other creatures constitutes for them history in at least a secondary sense. But is not God's Spirit free to relate to the non-human creation outside the confines of specifically human history? In any case are not the animals slain in sacrifice, the creatures assembled in the ark or the beings which share with man the Sabbath experience also "participants" in history and therefore in the glory of God? "By proclaiming the summons of a transcendent God", writes Evode Beaucamp, "the Bible unites ... the movement of the universe with the momentum of history".⁹²

The fourth criterion stipulates that: "it must be said of every man that it is essential to him that as he exists, God is over him as his Lord and he himself stands under the lordship of God the Lord". How can there be a Herrschaft of God over man which is separate and distinct from his lordship over all creation? Of course there may be facets of the life of man which require of God a corresponding difference of attitude and command. Man's dominion or lordship, for example, over animals singles him out in particular. But human responsibilities apart, what case can there be for positing a radically different lordship of God over man from that of the rest of creation? Is not God the Creator of all creatures and also by definition their Lord also? Can we point to any creature, that is genuinely created being, of whom God is not also Creator and lord? Lord, that is, precisely because he is their Creator? If we follow Barth too closely at this point we may threaten the very meaning of the terms "creation" and "Creator". Ironically it is A Catholic Dictionary which reflects similar thinking and compounds an absurdity: lower animals are "not directly created by God, but ... derived with their bodies from their parents by natural generation".⁹³

92. Beaucamp, The Bible and the Universe: Israel and the Theology of History, ET by David Balhatchet (London: Burns & Oates, 1963) p. 177.

93. A Catholic Dictionary, eds. W.E. Addis and T. Arnold (London: Virtue & Co., 1924) p. 31.

If creatures are not genuine creatures, God cannot be their Creator but likewise if there is no Creator there can be no genuine creatures either. The bald truth is that God must be the direct Creator and Lord of all existing beings.

The fifth and sixth criteria need to be taken together. Both stress the distinctive nature of man as an active participator in the work of God: "Not only his actions but his being will consist in his participation in what God does and means for him".⁹⁴ Here we may reach something close to a distinctive definition.

But it is important to note that this definition is one that emphasises activity. It is the work of man which so closely identifies him with the activity of God. Of course the question of activity, as Barth rightly points out, cannot be divorced from the question of being, indeed in "Real Man" the two are inseparable. But what Barth does not take up at this point is the obvious parallel between the work of God in Christ for the service of the whole earth and the unique ability of man so to perform the similar work of sacrifice. The crucial point of correspondence is precisely this analogy of relationship whereby man is able to reflect and past-figure within his own being the relationship of self-giving and costly service that characterises the work of God in himself as Father and Son. It is for this reason especially that the recounting of differences between man and other creatures must take into account from the beginning that man is so set within this twin determination and reality. He is the creature set between heaven and earth whose own being and activity is able to reflect and copy the divine being and activity.

What is therefore most puzzling and difficult in Barth's exposition of the distinctive nature of man is precisely his abstraction of man from his

94. CD, III, 2, p. 74.

relations within creation. A knowledge of man is proposed as he is in himself quite independently of the creaturely nature he shares with creation or the purposes of God within creation itself. Barth rightly inveighs against the notion of man finding himself through Selbsterkenntnis alone. "And in what he declares he knows we can only recognise himself, a phantom man, and not real man".⁹⁵ But the weakness of the exposition here consists in the tendency to underrate the reality of the creature in order to accentuate and develop an arguably exaggerated doctrine of man. So strongly is this line pressed that the reality of the created world is practically treated as a phantom or a shadow.

Barth subsequently makes the motive for his approach clear:

The real man whom we are seeking must obviously be the being which is distinguished as man from all other beings and which in spite of any affinity or relationship or common features that it may have with them is always man and only man, and is not therefore interchangeable with them,

and again "Real man cannot merge into his environment". But is it obvious that the real man sought must be so absolutely distinguishable from all other creatures? Barth's insistence and striving at this point betokens an insecurity of approach. Is not the fact of incarnation itself sufficient to render a theological distinction between man and "his environment"? It is not clear what theological gain there might be in Barth's determination at this point. How could it weaken his Christologically grounded anthropology if he generously accepted that much that we take to be peculiar to humankind is in fact a common creaturely possession endowed by God? How can it be construed as laying an axe to his Christological foundation if at this stage our definition of creaturehood is wider rather than narrower, more rather than less inclusive? Barth defends himself against this prospective criticism in the following way:

95. CD, III, 2, p. 75.

That this is so is clear at once if from the very outset we view him (man) in the history which has its basis in God's attitude to him. This does not require any unbecoming depreciation of any of our fellow-creatures. We do not know what particular attitude God may have to them, and therefore what may be their decisive particularity within the cosmos. We are not in a position to ascribe or deny any such particularity to them. We can and must accept them as our fellow-creatures with all due regard for the mystery with which God has veiled them. But we are clearly marked off from them by the history which has its history in God's attitude to us, to man. Existing in this history, the being of man is plainly separated and distinguished from all others.⁹⁶

I will not take up now the important question of the history of man which separates him from fellow creatures (see pp. 228f.). But we may well be puzzled to know what kind of election of man it could be that requires a practical agnosticism concerning the life and nature of our fellow-creatures. It is not adequate to answer "we do not know" as though the procedure was entirely open and therefore allowed for the question at the beginning as a serious option and possibility. Rather, as we have seen, the nature of his thesis in Part Two has advanced by the presumption of ignorance from the outset. What is at stake in the manner in which Barth approaches this problem is whether God is "the ground of the transformation of all things, of the entire world, and not simply the interior life".⁹⁷ Does God's work in Christ have relevance beyond the human community? It is possible that in all this Barth has over-reacted to what he takes to be the Darwinian threat which forms part of his later detailed discussion.⁹⁸ But it is not clear why he should take such objection to evolutionary findings if, as he contends, the question of distinctive theological anthropology does not in fact rest upon

96. CD, III, 2, p. 78; my italics.

97. Stuart McLean, op. cit., p. 64. McLean claims this as one of the positive aspects of Barth's thought which lead to political involvement but he fails to grasp the inadequacy of Barth's treatment of cosmology, p. 24f. —

98. CD, III, 2, n. pp. 79 - 90. It is not clear that Barth always maintained an attitude of hostility to evolutionary theory. In a letter to his grand-niece worried by the apparent conflict between Genesis and evolutionary theory, Barth writes: "Thus one's attitude to the creation story and the theory of evolution can take the form of an either/or only if one shuts oneself off completely either from faith in God's revelation or from the mind (or opportunity) for scientific understanding", To Christine Barth, 18 February 1965 in Karl Barth: Letters 1961 - 1968, op. cit., p. 184.

the results even of exact rather than speculative sciences of this kind. The welcoming attitude given to some forms of naturalistic evidence⁹⁹ has the character of special pleading as if some real issue were at stake. But if the self-disclosure of God as man does not depend upon any human attribute, faculty or disposition but upon the sheer, generous giving of his grace, the central theological question is not about man's nature or potentiality but about God's inclusive purpose in making himself known in this form and in this way. Moreover, if man represents the telos of God, as Barth advanced previously, the unresolved questions about the relationship between man and the rest of creation have a direct poignancy.

Man in Opposition to the Non-Human

The third sub-section of the second major section is entitled 'Real Man'. Barth now turns to the "constructive part" of his task, namely the answering of the question what "constitutes human being, i.e. the question of real man".¹⁰⁰ The first and simplest foundation is that "every man as such is the fellow man of Jesus".¹⁰¹ Barth emphasises that theology must not be "timid" in its insistence upon this primary relation. Man cannot in the light of this choose or determine a neighbour other than that which is given. Moreover, to be with Jesus is "to be a man with this correspondence, reflection and representation of the uniqueness and transcendence of God, to be with the One who is unlike us". We have therefore to reckon, secondly, with this decisive determination that Jesus is the one man among others, and because of that "basically and comprehensively, therefore, to be a man is to be with God".¹⁰² It is for this reason that Barth asserts what appears at first to be at odds with the rest of his results, namely that "godlessness

99. See the discussion of Adolf Portmann's Biologische Fragmente zu einer Lehre vom Menschen (1944) CD, III, 2, n. pp. 85 - 88. Portmann's views are welcomed because they aim to show "human particularity by means of biological research", n. p. 85.

100. CD, III, 2, p. 132.

101. CD, III, 2, n. p. 134.

102. CD, III, 2, p. 135; my italics.

is an ontological impossibility" for man. This is not to deny that sinfulness exists, but that man's being excludes sin as a possibility. Quite simply: man chooses an impossibility if he denies God. Since "sin ... is a mode of being contrary to our humanity", it follows that any attempt of man to surrender to sin "burdens, obscures and corrupts himself".¹⁰³

Barth emphasises that herein lies the distinctiveness of man as opposed to other creatures. He does not deny that "all creatures are as God is with them and they are therefore with God". But, Barth continues, "not every creature is with God as man is with God". Jesus is here seen as the "meaning and motive" of all creaturely being. But what it may mean for non-human creatures that they have "the same divine Counterpart as man, and to that extent the same ontological basis"¹⁰⁴ is simply not known. What we do know is that God did not choose to be like them, that is as a stone, or an animal or a star. But Barth is also insistent that what happens in the human sphere has significance for the totality of creation. He is eager to affirm human particularity in such a way that "the particularity of other creatures is also emphasised". Thus he surmises, "For all we know, their glory may well be the greater". It is not clear that "the outer circle" exists for the inner or that both circles do not have "their own autonomy and dignity, their distinctive form of being with God".¹⁰⁵ His overall stress on human particularity, however, is justified by the consideration that "godlessness (Gottlosigkeit) seems only to arise within the sphere of man". Since we do not know for certain the relationship (or absence of it) that may appertain to non-human creatures with God, it would be unwise to be absolute, but a negative judgement here is "preferable" to a positive one in the absence of clear evidence.¹⁰⁶

103. CD, III, 2, p. 136.

104. CD, III, 2, p. 137.

105. CD, III, 2, p. 138.

106. CD, III, 2, n. p. 139.

Barth offers two "material and therefore primary statements" about man. Firstly, that "the being of man as a being with Jesus rests upon the election (Erwählung) of God".¹⁰⁷ Here all the themes of Christian theology converge first as they are exemplified by Jesus and then as they affect creatures. For Jesus is the "spearhead of the will of God their Creator". And what is God's purpose?

It is the will of God, begins Barth, that the Yes which He as Creator has spoken to his creation should prevail; that all men and all creatures should be delivered from evil, i.e. from that which God the Creator has rejected and preserved from its threat and power ... a whole monstrous kingdom, a deep chaos of nothingness, i.e. of what the Creator has excluded and separated from the sphere of being, of what he did not will and therefore did not create, to which he gave no being, and which can exist only as non-being, and which thus forms the menacing frontier of what is according to the will of God.¹⁰⁸

Thus the saving power of God is directed not against sin, but "against the nothingness affirmed in sin". God through his own forethought and providence "bound Himself to His creation from the very act of creation" in order to ensure that the possibility of ontological dissipation became itself an ontological impossibility. Barth writes lyrically of this saving plan:

resolved before all things, before being was even planned, let alone actualised, before man fell into sin, before light was separated from darkness or being from non-being, and therefore before there was even a potential threat to being, let alone actual; resolved as the very first thing which God determined with regard to the reality distinct from Himself; resolved as the all-embracing content of His predestination of all creaturely being.¹⁰⁹

Barth now turns to his second material statement that "the being of man as being with Jesus consists in listening to the Word of God". At first this affirmation may appear odd for Jesus is himself "the sum of the divine address, the Word of God". But it is precisely for this reason (and in

107. CD, III, 2, p. 142.

108. CD, III, 2, p. 143; my italics.

109. CD, III, 2, p. 144; my italics.

this sense) that the proposition must be understood. For "If the eternal Logos is the Word in which God speaks with Himself, thinks Himself and is conscious of Himself, then in its identity with the man, Jesus, it is the Word in which God thinks the cosmos, speaks with the cosmos and imparts to the cosmos the consciousness of God".¹¹⁰ We need to ponder the katabasis of the Logos, for this Word is not "the presence of a dictator and tyrant brutalising the world he controls". Rather the Word speaks for itself "to teach, convince, to seek and win recognition, and to conquer in this individual manner". In passing, Barth formulates "a first definition of real man" which rests in turn upon "summoned" as the meaning of "real". We must say of man then that he is "Summoned because chosen".¹¹¹ For what can we know of real man but that he is summoned by God (von Gott aufgerufen)? How, apart from this summons, can man know his real self or what he really is?

Barth now turns to examine his statement that the being of man "is a history"... Only in the dynamic movement of the Creator towards the created, from the outer to the inner, is the real nature of the creation constituted. Moreover, it is within the specific history of Jesus that man is encapsulated and enveloped, so that whatever he may speak of himself as himself can only be done through reference to and in engagement with this "primal" history.¹¹² From this actual point in history the creature is "transcended from without and transcends himself outwards". Thus we reach the standpoint of affirming that "The word and summons of God to each and every man is the existence of the man Jesus".¹¹³

110. CD, III, 2, p. 147; my italics.

111. CD, III, 2, p. 150.

112. CD, III, 2, p. 157. Barth refers in passing to the reported saying of John Stuart Mill that humanity "cannot be reminded too often of the fact that there was once a man named Socrates". This must also be said and in a pre-eminent way of the man Jesus. For "In Him we have the central human factor", n. p. 160.

113. CD, III, 2, p. 164.

This insight is formulated into four propositions. He is confident that "it is in the closed circle of the relationship between divine grace and human gratitude that we have to seek the being of man". Firstly, when we speak of "true and essential gratitude" it is obvious that such belongs to God alone as the true Benefactor. This must be distinguished from passing human favours such as may be bestowed by one fellow creature on another. Secondly, when we consider man in relation to God, that is, that which concerns him essentially, we conclude that "God can only be thanked by man".¹¹⁴ Everything else that man does in the realm of his relationship with God has its root in this acknowledgement of gratitude. "Obedience without gratitude would be nothing", writes Barth.¹¹⁵ Thirdly, man fulfils and completes his true being by giving thanks to God. Finally, but with "hesitation and reserve", Barth proposes that "to thank God in this way is incumbent on man alone".¹¹⁶ In the sense that man is only one creature among many and since these also live by the grace of the divine Word, "as we must say of man that he is what he is only in gratitude towards God, we shall have to say the same of all other creatures". We have therefore disclosed a sign both of man's essential creatureliness and his humility. Thus "He (man) does no less than the sun and Jupiter, but also no more than the sparrow of the lane or indeed the humblest Mayfly".¹¹⁷ But Barth will not let go of his distinction: for it is precisely in man's humility of gratitude, such that in Psalm 148 he calls upon creation to praise God and is thus prepared to be classed with them, that we see who he is. For only man can actualise in his being, through his own action, what is required of all creation.

Barth reaches the point where he can isolate another important characteristic. Since man's gratefulness involves both receptivity to and reciprocity

114. CD, III, 2, p. 169.

115. CD, III, 2, p. 170.

116. CD, III, 2, p. 171; my italics.

117. CD, III, 2, p. 172.

with God, he is involved in personal responsibility (Selbstverantwortung). But this is not merely a potentiality. "God does not merely make man responsible by His Word", argues Barth, "but in speaking His Word He engages man in active responsibility to Himself".¹¹⁸ Barth's concluding proposition is that "As the being of man is a being in responsibility before God, it has the character of freedom (Freiheit) which God imparts to it".¹¹⁹ But how is it possible for man to stand free in relation to God, sovereign over all his creation? The notion of freedom is "the decisive definition of man as subject" because it is a "gift" from God not "to be hidden away in a napkin".¹²⁰ It must be seized and actualised. Freedom does not mean mere passivity, but movement in Selbstverantwortung before God. The being of man is the "history of this self-responsibility"¹²¹ which we see uniquely fulfilled in the Real Man. But how free is man's freedom? Has this "free being" (freies Wesen) real freedom of choice? Certainly. But as freedom granted by God, it is freedom to choose rightly. As Calvin would have it, if there is a choice at all, the choice can only be between "the highest good" and the "greatest misery".¹²² Therefore man's freedom can never be freedom to repudiate his freedom, that is his responsibility before God. While man may lose himself in his own sin and his own self may thus be incomprehensible to him, real man is always held by his Creator. The conception of real man has therefore been reached. "We have learned from the Word of God who and what this man is", concludes Barth.¹²³

How Distinct is Human Nature?

In summary, Barth proposes the following distinctions:

- i. To be a man is to be with God;
- ii. Man is a being which derives from God and is dependent upon him;

118. CD, III, 2, p. 174.

119. CD, III, 2, p. 174.

120. CD, III, 2, p. 195.

121. CD, III, 2, p. 196.

122. Calvin, La confession de foi et de l'église (1943) p. 9, cited CD, III, 2, n. p. 184.

123. CD, III, 2, p. 196.

- iii. Man's being rests upon the election of God;
- iv. Man's being consists in the hearing of the Word of God;
- v. The nature of man's being is a history;
- vi. Man is a being in gratitude;
- vii. Man is a being in responsibility before God.

(i) Ontology

Jesus is "the ontological determination" of man.¹²⁴ Can this not also be said of other creatures? Yes, replies Barth, but only in a general sense. "All creatures are as God is with them and they are therefore with God"; however "not every creature is with God as man is with God". We should, however, not rush to the "perverse conclusion" that the thing particularly true of man is not also true of other creatures "in their own way". But subsequent argument gives creatures status with one hand and then takes it away with the other. Thus "We can and must, therefore, say of every creature that it has the same concrete divine counterpart as man, and to that extent the same ontological basis", but also "in the case of non-human creatures we do not know what it means that they have this basis". This is an "impenetrable secret"; we do not know how they are with Jesus. God did not become a creature, but man. "It was in this man and not in any other creature that He saw the meaning and motive of His whole creative work".¹²⁵ Our difficulty can be summarised in three ways. Firstly, the "don't know" argument is deployed inconsistently. Earlier Barth spoke of how the Word "does not contain any ontology of heaven and earth",¹²⁶ that is, strictly speaking, we

124. CD, III, 2, p. 136.

125. CD, III, 2, p. 137; my italics. This discussion is closely paralleled later in the Dogmatics. Barth affirms that "God with us" is what we can say "of all creatures". But there is "a special act" which binds man and God together. But when we ask what this special act means, the reply is as follows: "The ordaining of salvation for man and of man for salvation is the original and basic will of God, the ground and purpose of His will as Creator", Church Dogmatics, IV, I, The Doctrine of Reconciliation, Part One, ET by G.W. Bromiley (1956), pp. 8 and 9.

126. CD, III, 2, p. 6.

cannot even know of our ignorance of ontology. In this section the argument is employed variously to offer a positive reading of creatures, "For all we know their glory may be the greater",¹²⁷ or negatively (relatively): "since we do not know how non-human creatures are with God, we cannot give a categorical denial", or (preferentially - in the same note): "a negative answer is at least preferable to a positive".¹²⁸ The problem is that the "don't know" argument does not constitute, in the way in which Barth presents it, a positive statement of man's distinctiveness. At least in principle as much may be claimed for other creatures in their "own way". Secondly, despite earlier protest to the contrary, Barth slips too easily from Christology to anthropology. Thus when wanting to emphasise the special place of man, he speaks Christologically in a way that supposes that Real man is ordinary man, whereas what can be claimed for Jesus can only (as Barth accepts) be claimed with reserve and caution for man generally. The argument of course is circular, but more importantly it confuses the very possibility of knowing what Barth claims we cannot know about the ontology of creatures. Thirdly, he writes: "Of the other created spheres we know only that the God who has created all other men and all other creatures for the sake of this one man confronts them in majestic dissimilarity".¹²⁹ This, alas, is precisely what we cannot know, if we do not know! The positive thesis that man is differentiated from other creatures because God has become a human creature must, if it is true, stand by itself. It implies no negative judgement, categorical or provisional, about other creatures. The simple point is this: if we have no real knowledge of the ontology of other creatures, then we cannot affirm, without difficulty and inconsistency, the special place of man.

That our criticisms are just and right at this point is confirmed by

127. CD, III, 2, p. 138.

128. CD, III, 2, p. 139.

129. CD, III, 2, p. 137; my italics.

subsequent discussion of the question of "godlessness" in the non-human sphere. Barth denies that godlessness, and therefore of course sin, can arise in the animal creation.¹³⁰ He doesn't want to give a "categorical" denial since "we do not know how non-human creatures are with God".¹³¹ But he is clear that sin is only a possibility "where the creature is confronted by its Creator" and this he claims can only be properly said of man. Barth may be on strong ground here. But he does not address the possibility that non-human creation may variously share the effects of sin, or as he previously accepted in relation to Romans 8, be "bondaged to decay" in a way that resembles the human sphere.¹³² For if there is no godlessness possible, either in a direct, indirect or mediated sense, how are we to make sense of the notions of reconciliation and redemption within the non-human realm? That Barth's thesis does not stand the test of coherence is demonstrated four pages on (in recounting his doctrine of reconciliation) when he is actually forced to give some account of "evil" in the non-human world:

It is the will of God that the Yes which He as the Creator has spoken to His creation should prevail; that all men and all creatures should be delivered from evil, i.e. from that which God the Creator has rejected, and preserved from its threat and power.

Is not "evil" to be recognised as "godlessness" and, as with man, seen as a possibility and threat for all creation? Barth's thought reveals further inconsistencies:

130. There is an underlying theological issue in Barth's stridency here. Creation, as the work of the one holy God, must be good. He will not compromise on this basic insight. "Every creature of God is wholly and unreservedly good", Deliverance to the Captives, ET by M. Wieser, pref. by John Marsh, 2nd ed. (London: SCM Press, 1966) p. 94; also Credo, op. cit., pp. 35 - 37. Evil, human or non-human, can only be "nothingness", Church Dogmatics, III, 3, The Doctrine of Creation ('The Creator and His Creature') ET by G.W. Bromiley and R. Ehrlich (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1960) pp. 289 - 368.

131. CD, III, 2, p. 139.

132. See esp. discussion pp. 294-8.

- a. "And so the will of God for His creation is to preserve it from the nothingness to which it would inevitably succumb apart from the divine initiative, to save the creature from the threat which it cannot overcome of itself".¹³³ The language of salvation applied here to all creatures implies a common threat, i.e. a common godlessness.
- b. "And for the fulfilment of this aim He bound Himself to His creation from the very act of creation". Does not Barth here confess the implication which elsewhere he has sought to avoid, namely that God's incarnation in human nature necessarily means that all nature is drawn unto him?
- c. "He alone is the archetypal man (Jesus) whom all threatened and enslaved men and creatures must follow". Barth cannot have it both ways. He cannot at one stage speak of godlessness as an "ontological impossibility" for non-human creatures and then at another speak of their "threatened and enslaved existence".
- d. The final paragraph is so telling that it needs to be reproduced in full:

His (Jesus') existence was eternally resolved in the sovereign will of God to save us and all creation: resolved before all things, before being was even planned, let alone actualised, before man fell into sin, before light was separated from darkness or being from non-being ... resolved as the all-embracing content of His predestination of all creaturely being. It is for this reason that the man Jesus is the executive and revelatory spearhead of the will of God fulfilled on behalf of creation. It is for this reason that He is the kingdom of God in person. It is for this reason that as against all other men and the whole world of creation He is the Representative of the uniqueness and transcendence of God. It is for this reason that to be a man is properly and primarily to be with God.¹³⁴

Perhaps here Barth's internal inconsistency is most apparent. For whatever

133. CD, III, 2, p. 143; my italics.

134. CD, III, 2, p. 144; my italics.

may be true about the special place and nature of man in creation, we can only point to the fact that it is not here established. The final line simply does not follow from the previous. What Barth has established is the special nature and work of Jesus, but not man as "ordinary" as contrasted with "real" man. It is ironical that having established and stated so clearly the creation-centred work of God in incarnation, creation and reconciliation, Barth fails to see that his anthropocentric conclusion does not follow. This is not to suggest that some kind of Christologically qualified anthropocentric conclusion is inappropriate, i.e. that man as the icon of Christ could not validly be understood as representing and focusing in his relations with the natural world the will and purpose of God. But whatever the rich possibilities, they are not stated. What must follow from his argument is that not only man but all creatures are to be understood as "properly and primarily to be with God".

(ii) Dependence

We take this issue one stage further when we consider the second distinction, that man is a being deriving from God and dependent upon him. In this, Barth maintains that "we do not speak speculatively but concretely of man".¹³⁵ But how can it be that this is distinctly true of man alone? We search in vain for the necessary concretisation of this distinction. Our difficulty may be summed up in the following line: "It thus concerns all men and every man that in the man Jesus God Himself is man, and therefore acts and rules and makes history".¹³⁶ No-one of course would wish to deny that the incarnation "concerns" man, but it is only when we ask in what way does it distinctly concern man that we are faced with a void in this matter. It may well be a logical and necessary assumption that the incarnation presupposes a special relationship between man and God, and Barth may well be right in feeling free to pursue his thesis on the basis of this assumption.

135. CD, III, 2, p. 140.

136. CD, III, 2, p. 141.

But we can only point here to the fact that it is an assumption. As advanced here it does not constitute an argument for human distinctiveness as opposed to other creatures. We have yet to learn what distinctive relationship, work or function necessarily corresponds to the divine incarnation in human flesh.

(iii) Election

The next statement defines man as a being resting upon the election of God. What meaning does this have for the non-human? It is highly significant that man's election is placed within the context of God's purposes for all of creation. This is first developed Christologically in terms of the work of Jesus who is seen as the "penetrating spearhead of the will of God ... penetrating because in Him the will of God is already fulfilled and revealed and the purpose of God for all men and creatures has thus reached its goal; and the spearhead to the extent that there has still to be a wider fulfilment of the will of God and its final consummation".¹³⁷

In the light of our earlier criticisms, the manner in which Barth now enumerates the place and function of man is highly significant. For to be a man with Jesus is to share the purposes of God within creation. This work begun in man "which has found its first and proper object in Him, penetrates and illuminates the whole world of creation".¹³⁸ Here Barth is at his most convincing. For the election of man, far from separated and distanced from the whole of creation, is Christologically grounded in terms of God's enveloping will for the cosmos which along with man awaits its final consummation.

(iv) Hearing the Word

A similar positive interpretation is offered in Barth's second "material and therefore primary" statement that man's being consists in listening to the Word of God. Jesus is the "sum of the divine address, the Word of God, to the created cosmos". This man is himself the divine speech; the divine

137. CD, III, 2, p. 143; my italics.

138. CD, III, 2, p. 145.

Yes standing alongside creation in person. Moreover Jesus is the Word "in which God thinks the cosmos, speaks with the cosmos and imparts to the cosmos the consciousness of its God".¹³⁹ And what is the meaning of this Word for creation as a whole? "It (creation) belongs to its Creator and to no-one else", writes Barth. "This is what is declared by the man Jesus within it ...". As advanced, therefore, the distinction between man and the non-human creation does not consist in the fact that one hears the Word and the other cannot, since the Word has been spoken "for all creatures". This can be maintained even though it is specifically "in the human sphere that the Word has been spoken".¹⁴⁰ Nevertheless Barth does not ask the most important theological question here. As Athanasius puts it: "Why would God have made creatures by whom he did not wish to be known?" To limit, even equivocally, God's knowability by his creatures necessarily diminishes the power of the Logos. To take human communication as the norm of divine knowing is to eclipse the penetration of the world by Word and Spirit. It is because "the Word spread himself everywhere" that Athanasius concludes: "Everything is filled with the knowledge of God".¹⁴¹

(v) History

Barth's discussion, however, reaches a critical stage when he seeks to sum up the nature of man's being as a history. "It takes place that the Creator concerns Himself about His creature by Himself becoming a creature".¹⁴² But who is the creature here presupposed? The answer is wholly anthropomonic. Thus we know that man is a history from Jesus, something that cannot be said of animals. History is defined as a dynamic interrelationship between a being confronted by another who "transcending its own nature" shapes "its being in the nature proper to it, so that it is compelled and enabled to transcend itself in response". "We do not really

139. CD, III, 2, p. 147; my italics.

140. CD, III, 2, p. 149.

141. Athanasius, op. cit., pp. 161 and 173.

142. CD, III, 2, p. 157.

know what we are talking about when we speak of the history of a plant or animal".¹⁴³ Thus "Being in history is human being alone" (Geschichtliches Sein ist das menschliche und nur das menschliche Sein).¹⁴⁴ The task of grappling with Barth's thought here is daunting. For this present stage, whatever the merits of its definition, does not follow from the previous. Since man is elected alongside and within the context of other creatures, and since the Word of God spoken for him is also the same Word spoken for all creatures as their "true and valid promise",¹⁴⁵ it is difficult to grasp how man can now be conceived independently of these previously established connections and relationships. We may develop this matter in the form of two questions. Firstly, what difference of concern, intention or purpose is represented on God's part by the choice of incarnation which is not already manifest by the fact of creation? In other words, what we have yet to learn from Barth is how the nature of man can be distinguished from that of creation, if the work of incarnation and creation have the same telos, namely the preservation and salvation of the creature? If the being of man is distinguished by the will and purpose of God, as with all other creatures, and if the purpose of the incarnation is so to bind that creation to himself to preserve it from the threat and possibility of non-being, then it is difficult to know what precise difference of purpose there could be which alone can separate theologically the work of incarnation from creation. Indeed as Barth previously accepted the work of incarnation precedes the work of creation, and in this sense what is now being claimed as the distinguishing mark of man must in reality be the distinguishing mark of all creatures, namely that God is with them and that in him is their future and destiny secure.

The second question may be expressed in this way: since creation and

143. CD, III, 2, p. 158 and n. p. 158.

144. CD, III, 2, p. 174.

145. CD, III, 2, p. 149.

incarnation are two interlocking works of God, not to be separated or seen in isolation, how can a wholly anthropocentric interpretation be possible? Of course man may be the centre, indeed the pivot, of God's designs, even the efficacious means by which they may be achieved at least in some part. But human history cannot by itself constitute creation history (Schöpfungsgeschichte) as though the concern of God for the creation could be exhausted solely in terms of this relationship alone. For how can the purposes represented by the act of incarnation be less than those of the act of creation? Since the one precedes and follows the other, we have no option but to assert that no aspect of the Word can be irrelevant to creation in which the Word becomes incarnate. Elizabeth Moberly suggests that gnostic ideology is now replaced by a perennial temptation to dualism. In relation to man we are confronted by "dualism by default". "Man alone is seen as important", she writes, "though in this it may be forgotten that man himself is a 'material' being and is closely involved with the rest of the material creation".¹⁴⁶

(vi) Gratitude

A similar difficulty is apparent in the description of man as a being in gratitude. As a positive statement it is both obvious and unexceptional. But Barth is not happy simply to isolate this one factor and point to its significance. He does not simply state its positive meaning and pass on. Rather he proceeds by characterising this feature as wholly distinctive of man; thus in note (2) "God can only be thanked by man" and in note (4) "To thank God in this way is incumbent on man alone".¹⁴⁷ Barth's way of working here is illustrative of the underlying confusion of his thought. This is shown by looking more carefully at the stages of arguments in note (4). He begins by accepting that this final exclusion should be made with "hesitation and reserve". Because we "cannot penetrate the inner reality" of the divine/non-human encounter we "simply do not know the nature of this

146. Moberly, Suffering Innocent and Guilty (London: SPCK, 1978) p. 19.

147. CD, III, 2, pp. 169 and 171; my italics.

relationship".¹⁴⁸ But Barth fails to see that if we cannot know this of the non-human, we cannot logically claim it wholly as a special category of man. He seems to sense something of this difficulty, for he then proceeds by indicating the need to emphasise the words "in this way" in his statement. Thus "To thank God in this way is incumbent on man alone". And thus "As we must say of man that he is what he is only in gratitude towards God, we shall have to say the same of all other creatures".¹⁴⁹ The question we have therefore to ask is: How distinctive is this distinction? If we cannot really know that other creatures do not show gratitude at the very least "in their own way", what kind of distinction can be proposed but one of degree? Barth compounds the difficulty by indicating the scriptural support in Psalm 148 for the praise of God by non-human creatures. His exegesis of scripture here is tortuous: for it is not in the fact of common gratitude that man's place is to be discerned but because:

... we know no other creature on whom it is incumbent to give thanks to God and therefore to fulfil His being in such a way that he himself is man responsible for this fulfilment, and must answer for himself in this fulfilment. It is this being in responsibility for gratitude towards God which isolates the being of man from that of all other creatures¹⁵⁰

Our perplexity arises from trying to understand what gain theologically is made by this special pleading. Even if we accept that man's gratitude is a responsibility laid upon him whereas for non-human creatures gratitude is a natural aspect of their being, we may still fail to see how this justifies the central proposition that "To thank God in this way is incumbent on man alone". Indeed, far from seeing the question of gratitude as a distinctive capacity of man, we may rather judge from the evidence that Barth himself advances a certain solidarity between man and other creatures. We have to say that Barth's actual conclusion does not bear examination of

148. CD, III, 2, p. 171.

149. CD, III, 2, p. 172; my italics.

150. CD, III, 2, p. 173.

the evidence that he deduces in favour of it.¹⁵¹ He writes:

We know nothing of the way in which the rest of creation gives thanks to God and therefore is. It is incumbent upon man alone to give thanks to God and therefore to be in this way.¹⁵²

Within a discussion of four pages, Barth thus moves his position from "we do not know" that non-human creatures express gratitude; to what is said of man must be said of all other creatures "in their own way"; to "we know nothing" of how creation gives thanks.¹⁵³

(vii) Responsibility

There is little in Barth's exposition of human responsibility that we would want to argue with, except that as defined this responsibility extends only to his fellow man and to God. There is no sense of responsibility articulated towards the created world in general or animals in particular. The "real man" finally discovered and enumerated in these closing pages concern a man abstracted and "un-real" in terms of the actual environment in which God has placed him. Has man therefore no responsibilities to the wide and beneficent created order in which God has been pleased to place him?

151. See, e.g. Artur Weiser who along with almost all Old Testament commentators understands Psalm 148 as a tremendous vision of cosmic praise to God illustrating "the final goal which unites the whole universe in a communion of God's service", The Psalms, ET by Herbert Hartwell, Old Testament Library (London: SCM Press, 1962) p. 837. Weiser also stresses how the salvation theme "is the culmination of the whole psalm and is of crucial importance to the whole world", p. 838.

152. CD, III, 2, p. 174; my italics.

153. CD, III, 2, pp. 171; 172; 143; my italics. Elsewhere Barth offers an entirely different interpretation of man and animals in this respect. In answer to Calvin's question about what constitutes the supreme good (the knowledge of God) without which "our condition is more unhappy than that of any of the brutes", Barth confidently asserts that "brute beasts do (and the same can be said of the whole creation) accomplish God's intentions in creating them". Moreover the non-human, animate and inanimate, "leave us (man) behind in this task of responding to the divine destination". And how do we know this? Barth's reply may surprise us: "Around us, praising is perpetual. The whole creation joins together in order to respond to God who created it. But ... man stands still and does not do what he should do. This is man's misery not to fulfil the meaning of his creation". Note how the issue turns not on whether creation can praise God and thus fulfil its destiny but whether man is also capable. The Faith of the Church: A Commentary on the Apostle's Creed according to Calvin's Catechism, ed. by Jean-Louis Leuba, ET by Gabriel Vahanian, Fontana Books (London: Collins, 1960) p. 23.

And are these not obligations and responsibilities to God as Creator and designer? Again we point to the context in which man's responsibility is articulated in the Genesis sagas, namely that man's dominion is a result of being made in the image of God. Despite his particular interpretation of the image, it is significant that Barth's stress upon human responsibility is in fact most consonant with the interpretation which he rejects, namely that the image of God in man is co-terminous with moral responsibility towards God and creation.¹⁵⁴

Barth writes: "Man is the one creature which God in creating calls to free personal responsibility before Him, and thus treats as a self, a free being". As positive exposition there is nothing here to disagree with. In order for man's relations with other creatures to so prefigure and reflect the divine beneficence within creation, such a morally free and responsible agency must be presupposed. But Barth's subsequent statement unwittingly challenges the basis on which the above can be made, thus:

Among all creatures he is the one with which God, in giving it being, also concluded His covenant - the covenant of the free Creator with a free creature, so that man's being bears irrefutably the character of a partner with the divine subject and therefore the character of freedom.¹⁵⁵

But, as we have seen, man is not the only being with which God has chosen to enter this covenant relationship; other living beings are also included and thus there must be other "partners" to this fundamental relationship. And it is to this that Barth again turns.

154. Another way of understanding the mutuality between human and non-human in the Old Testament is through analysis of the concept of nephesh (breathing, blood-filled life) which is used for both, Wolff, op. cit., pp. 18 - 22. This nephesh is inescapably corporate which is why the future hope for Israel includes "the hope of a final consummation ... of all creation", George A.F. Knight, A Christian Theology of the Old Testament (London: SCM Press, 1959) p. 340.

155. CD, III, 2, p. 194; my italics.

'Man in His Determination as the Covenant-Partner of God' is Barth's third section and his first sub-section is entitled 'Jesus, Man For Other Men'. His concern here is to understand man within a twin determination: on the one hand real man lives with God as his covenant-partner but, on the other hand, we know man as man, that is as a creature made by God existing within the cosmos. The question therefore arises as to the "inner relationship" between these two aspects. His determination to be with God as the divine partner on one hand, and his "creaturely and cosmic nature", his humanity, on the other.¹⁵⁶ Is there anything of the divine determination left in man as we experience him?

Real Man Only for Other Men

If we want to know how it may be possible for both the human and divine determinations of man to co-exist so that the one fully supports and allows for the other, we need look no further than Jesus himself. For the unity in Jesus, that of his relationship as Son to the Father "does not destroy the difference between divinity and humanity even in Him".¹⁵⁷ In the hypostasis of the Word itself, as in the history of Jesus (which in turn is the history of man) we see the fullest, most comprehensive definition of God as that being which not forsaking his divinity seeks and includes the humanity of man. Barth writes lyrically of the mission of Jesus:

156. CD, III, 2, p. 221.

157. CD, III, 2, p. 307. In passing Barth rejects the notion of transubstantiation (the doctrine that the host is changed into the Body of Christ) as an analogy of the incarnation. We need to see and posit the divine dimension as the fulfilling and the completing of the creaturely element rather than as its replacement or diminution (p. 208). But Barth does not take up the significance of this sacramental co-existence. He does not explore what it may mean for creaturely elements to become living signs of God's presence. "In the sacraments, they (non-human creatures) are freed from their dumbness and proclaim directly to the believer the new creative Word of God", writes Dietrich Bonhoeffer. "In the sacrament, Christ is the mediator between nature and God, and stands for all creatures before God", Christology, ET John Bowden and intro. by E.H. Roberston, The Fontana Library of Philosophy and Theology (London: Collins, 1974) p. 67. See also A.R. Peacocke's 'A Sacramental View of Nature' in Man and Nature, op. cit., pp. 132 - 142, and especially 'The Dynamic Sacramentalism of St. Gregory of Nyssa' in H. Maurice Relton's Studies in Christian Doctrine (London: Macmillan & Co., 1960) pp. 250 - 270.

In no sense, therefore, is He there for Himself first and then for man, not for a first cause first - for the control and penetration of nature by culture, or the progressive triumph of spirit over matter, or the higher development of man or the cosmos. For all this, for any interest either in His own person or intrinsically possible ideals of this kind, we can find no support whatever in the humanity of Jesus.

He concludes: "What interests Him, and does so exclusively, is man, other men as such, who need Him and are referred to Him for help and deliverance". Therefore "It is for their sake that He takes the place of God in the cosmos".¹⁵⁸ Is this then the sum total of God's work in Jesus? Is there nothing else to be added? "No", replies Barth, "really nothing else".

We see at once that if the humanity of Jesus is real humanity, then he stands in relation to other men "in the most comprehensive and radical sense". What is completed therefore is not the operation of deliverance simply "from without, standing alongside", but rather by standing within their situation "He interposes Himself for them", within their very being.¹⁵⁹ But since we need also to remember the divine determination of Jesus, that "In his divinity He is from and to God", we are led further into the mystery of the incarnation. For "In this there is disclosed the choice and will of God Himself".¹⁶⁰ That is, since God is true to Himself and acts so to reveal nothing except his true being, we see disclosed in Jesus the divine essence. "God repeats in this relationship ad extra a relationship proper to Himself in His inner divine essence", maintains Barth. Entering into this relationship, "He makes a copy of Himself".¹⁶¹

Barth proceeds to affirm the humanity of Jesus as the true "image of God, the imago Dei". But in so doing, he points to the qualification inherent in this term. Whilst in his divinity, Jesus is the "repetition and reflection" —

158. CD, III, 2, p. 208.

159. CD, III, 2, p. 212.

160. CD, III, 2, p. 217.

161. CD, III, 2, p. 218.

of God, in his humanity, he "is only indirectly and not directly identical with God".¹⁶² For the image belongs "intrinsically to the creaturely world, to the cosmos" and therefore necessarily concerns the correspondence between man and God and not God and God. Hence Barth sees a "disparity" between the nature of the relationship within the innermost nature of the Trinity, and that of God the Creator with that of the creature. But for all the dissimilarity and difference, the image necessarily speaks of a profound similarity. This similarity, however, is not one of being (analogia entis) but one of relationship (analogia relationis). The being of God cannot be compared with that of man but there is a correspondence. "The correspondence and similarity of the two relationships consists in the fact that the eternal love in which God as the Father loves the Son, and as the Son loves the Father, and in which God as the Father is loved by the Son and as the Son by the Father, is also the love which is addressed by God to man." The humanity of Jesus is therefore seen as the "direct correlative" of his divine being with the Father.¹⁶³

Real Creature for All Creation?

This section must not be overlooked because the way in which Barth advances his understanding of the incarnation crucially affects what may be properly said of the non-human in creation. There are two issues of importance. The

162. CD, III, 2, p. 219. It is this kind of language which makes commentators uneasy, e.g. "Karl Barth, that least 'gnostic' of modern theologians, still speaks of the 'worldly' form of Christ veiling the Word of God, in a way that seems to revive the distinction between a substantial and eternal truth and its accidental and temporal clothing", Rowan Williams, The Wound of Knowledge: Christian Spirituality from the New Testament to St. John of the Cross (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1979) p. 31; his italics. A view taken up and developed by Charles T. Waldrop: "The human nature (of God) actually veils God's revelation". Perhaps the most vital criticism is expressed by Waldrop in this question: "Is the theologically necessary distinction between God and man finally collapsed through the notion that men have their being only in Christ?" He sees independent human existence "obscured by Barth's claim that the human nature which the Son assumed in the incarnation has no independent existence", Karl Barth's Christology: Its Basic Alexandrian Character, Reason and Religion 21 (Berlin: Moulton Publishers, 1984) pp. 174 and 177. If this is true of human existence, how much more must it be true of the non-human creation?

163. CD, III, 2, p. 220.

first concerns the purpose and scope of the salvific work of Christ. We ask primarily for whom is the incarnation? Barth's answer, as we have seen, is uncompromising:

What interests Him (Jesus), and does so exclusively, is man, other men as such, who need Him and are referred to Him for help and deliverance. Other men are the object of the saving work in the accomplishment of which He Himself exists. It is for their sake that He takes the place of God in the cosmos ... From the very first, in the fact that He is a man, Jesus is not without His fellow-men, but to them and with them and for them. He is sent and ordained by God to be their Deliverer. Nothing else? No, really nothing else.¹⁶⁴

Is Barth now saying what in fact he has so far resisted in his discussion of man? Is there not here anthropomorphism against which he protested in his opening section, i.e. " ... we must not and will not be guilty of any failure to appreciate the significance of the cosmos, of any insulating of man from the realm of the non-human creation?"¹⁶⁵ What is most difficult in Barth's exposition is not its positive exposition but now its avowedly exclusive flavour. Of course Jesus is for other men, for all men, for them as God is for them, but can he be the "man for other men" without also being the creature for creation? How can this Jesus be the "meaning and motive of all creaturely being" if his exclusive concern is man? How is it possible for Jesus to be the spearhead of the creative will of God against the evil, and threatened non-being of creation, if his exclusive interest is the salvation of humankind alone? The discordance with his earlier writing is so apparent that we may be forced to regard the above as misguided enthusiasm on Barth's part. But his subsequent statement that "whatever else the humanity of Jesus may be, can be reduced to this denominator (i.e. exclusive concern for man) and finds here its key and explanation" perpetuates the error. It misses the vital link that what happens in the human sphere has relevance for all other spheres as well. How can Jesus be the "sum of the divine

164. CD, III, 2, pp. 208/9; my italics.

165. CD, III, 2, p. 4.

address, the Word of God to the created cosmos" if in fact Jesus is concerned with none other than man?

The second issue concerns the analogia relationis between the being of God and man.¹⁶⁶ Much that Barth writes here is compelling and attractive. It must follow that man created in God's image reflects the inner life of God through correspondence and copy. But the significance of this takes us much further than Barth will allow. For the creation sagas are united in the conviction that as God is set in relation to man, so man is set in relationship to the order of creation. Barth had earlier made play of the "twin determination" of man's being ordered both upwards towards the heavens and also set within creation to be responsible for it. He is placed unmistakably within a series of earthly relations in which he must exercise power and responsibility, which in turn is related to his position as God's vice-gerent and representative. Now if this is true we must go further and say that if the reality of the divine purpose is reflected by man not in terms of his being as man, but in terms of his relationships, there must also be some inner correspondence between the nature of God's relation to man and man's relation to the natural world. In other words, man must fashion and direct the created world in his relationship with it in an analogous way that God in Christ offers himself in service for the life of man. It is striking that Barth continually fails to articulate this possibility. He speaks of how there is "an inner divine correspondence and similarity between the being of the man Jesus for God and His being for His fellows".¹⁶⁷ But if this is so it must also follow that there is a correspondence between the relationship of Christ's service for us and our appointed work of service

166. Hendry clearly misunderstands Barth when he accuses him of "a verbal lapse" because he fails to articulate an analogy of being. It is not because of his "profound regard for the uniqueness of the divine creation" (op. cit., p. 148) but because of his profound regard for the uniqueness of the divine being that he rejects analogia entis - a point so strongly and repeatedly made that it opens him to the opposite charge of neo-Apollinarianism, see note 152 above and Waldrop, op. cit., p. 173.

167. CD, III, 2, p. 224.

to the whole earth. We may say that as "Jesus is Man for other Men" so "Man, made in God's image, is Creature for other Creatures"

Man in Fellowship

The second sub-section of this third section is entitled: 'The Basic Form of Humanity'. "We have to ask what it is", questions Barth, "that makes them (human beings) capable of entering into covenant with God as the creatures of God". This does not involve, in the first place, any positing of some kind of "worth or merit" of man that makes him worthy to claim such a right. Quite simply there can be "no claim of this kind; no claim of the creature against the Creator", he argues. Secondly, it does not suggest any special capability on man's part that enables him to enter into the covenant relationship. "His creaturely essence has no power to do this", maintains Barth. Qualifications aside, man properly has such a capacity "only as God makes him His partner, as He calls him to take up this relationship, as he exists as the one summoned to do so". Thus because, and only because, of this fore-election of God, can we say that "man's creaturely essence cannot be alien or opposed to this grace of God", indeed because of it there exists a "certain familiarity".¹⁶⁸

Barth draws from this discussion another distinguishing criterion for theological anthropology. What man is, is itself determined "by the primary text, i.e. by the humanity of the man Jesus". The relationship of the humanity of Jesus to ourselves is not a filling out of an already known concept of ourselves; it is not yet one more interesting, even superior, way of understanding what we take to be humanity. Confident of our primary source we must affirm that anything "incompatible with this similarity (between Jesus and ourselves) is "ipso facto non-human".¹⁶⁹ To illustrate and

168. CD, III, 2, p. 224.

169. CD, III, 2, p. 226.

reinforce this line of exposition, Barth considers at length, and offers a penetrating critique of, Friedrich Nietzsche's anti-theological anthropology. For Nietzsche is "the prophet of that humanity without the fellow-man".¹⁷⁰ He was egotistically self-obsessed, as illustrated in his monumental Ecce Homo: " ... my humanity does not consist in fellow feeling with men, but in restraint from fellow feeling". Despising Christianity, Nietzsche vilified its emphasis upon sympathy and suffering for others. "The neighbour is transfigured into a God ... Jesus is the neighbour transposed into a divinity, into a cause awakening emotion", he writes.¹⁷¹ Moreover what is found utterly repugnant in Christianity is its elevation of the Crucified One into a God. No superman in Nietzsche's terms could emerge while people still believed in the vicariousness of suffering; no true independent, autonomous, self-assured, self-justified man could emerge whilst Christian morality perverted the self-will in man. Barth concludes that for all the terribleness of his doctrine, Nietzsche "discovered the Gospel itself in a form which was missed even by the majority of its champions, let alone its opponents, in the 19th century". He was a prophet of humanity without fellow-humanity, "he thus hurled himself against the strongest and not the weakest point in the opposing front".¹⁷² Against Nietzsche, Barth secures and underpins his position. In short "The humanity of Jesus consists in His being for man".¹⁷³ From this it follows that the humanity of every man consists in the determination of man's being as a being with others. Not in himself but only in co-existence, fellowship and mutuality, does man correspond to his determination as the covenant partner of God. "Humanity" (Humanität) therefore becomes a "determination of human being"

170. CD, III, 2, n. p. 235.

171. Nietzsche, Ecce Homo (written 1888, published 1908) p. 329; Der Will zu Macht, p. 142, cited in CD, III, 2, n. pp. 234 and 239.

172. CD, III, 2, n. p. 235.

173. CD, III, 2, p. 243.

(eine Bestimmtheit des menschlichen Seins).¹⁷⁴

What does this discovery of our basic humanity mean in practice? Barth suggests four elements. Firstly, "Being in encounter is a being in which one looks the other in the eye". Secondly, in the fact "that there is mutual speech and hearing". Thirdly that "we render mutual assistance in the act of being", and finally that all these occurrences happen on both sides "with gladness".¹⁷⁵ Great play is made of the notion of gladness. It is not enough to describe man generally as "being in encounter", we must press forward to humanity as a form of "being which is gladly actualised by man".¹⁷⁶ Here truly we can say that man's gladness in the exercise and fulfilment of his humanity is the conditio sine qua non of his humanity.

In a concluding footnote, Barth clarifies this final point further. "We do not associate ourselves, therefore", he writes, "with the common theological practice of depreciating human nature as much as possible in order to oppose to it more effectively what may be made of man by divine grace". The logic of Christologically grounded anthropology must lead to a positive affirmation of human nature as essentially good. "It is not by nature, but by its denial and mis-use, that man is alien and opposed to the grace of God", argues Barth.¹⁷⁷ The "false propositions" of Roman Catholicism and humanism arise on one hand by their extreme emphasis upon the utter depravity of man, and curiously by their conceding to man a power to save himself (or co-operate in his salvation) on the other. Man cannot, of course, save himself. "God alone saves and pardons and renews him", and in God's

174. CD, III, 2, p. 291. Humanität does not mean 'humanity' in the sense of humankind but 'humaneness'. It should be noted that this definition alone is question begging. It is not clear, from the standpoint of 'exact science', whether altruism can be wholly denied to other species see, e.g. Stephen R.L. Clark's The Nature of the Beast: Are Animals Moral? (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982) esp. Ch. 6 'Altruism' pp. 55 - 66.

175. CD, III, 2, pp. 250; 252; 260 and 265.

176. CD, III, 2, p. 266.

177. CD, III, 2, n. p. 274.

free mercy is the only security of salvation.¹⁷⁸

No Fellowship with the Non-Human?

In Part One Barth took as his interpretive theme the notion of covenant as the "inner basis of creation". This consisted in the calling of man (alone in creation) to be God's covenant partner. Our previous discussion concerned the difficulty in ignoring that other living beings were also, according to the biblical witness, called to participate in that relationship (see pp. 67f.). Thus when Barth begins this section "We have to ask what it is that makes them (human beings) capable of entering into covenant with God as the creatures of God", we need to be aware that he begins with the very presupposition which requires justification. It is not just that he begins with the wrong question, but that the very posing of it must lead in the wrong direction. Barth's pursuit of "a human form" corresponding to the "essence" of humanity¹⁷⁹ marks off an inevitable digression from the biblical witness. Gone at this point is the insight that all creatures share together aspects of creaturely life and common dependence upon God the Creator. Gone is the "familiar thought", as Barth describes it, which "links together man and beast" in the Old and New Testaments. The very nature of Barth's enquiry as he has set himself must lead inexorably to greater sophistication based on a void. This is not to deny the many perceptive and challenging points made by Barth as usual in the prosecution of his case, but it is to place a major question mark against the possibility of the argument summarised so far.

But it is significant, despite the fact that creation is left entirely to one side, that Barth pursues the question of human creaturely relations in some detail. His discussion of Nietzsche is both illuminating and telling. But we may still wonder whether Nietzsche had not a grain of perception in these words: "The neighbour is transfigured into a God ... Jesus is the

178. CD, III, 2, n. p. 275.

179. CD, III, 2, n. p. 226.

neighbour transposed into divinity, into a cause awakening emotion".¹⁸⁰

This is not to seriously question Barth's presupposition that in Jesus Christ is disclosed the objective truth about human life and destiny, but we may surmise whether a presentation of the Gospel which concerns itself solely with human life, suffering and well-being, leaving to one side responsibilities to creation, may not to the outsider be validly, albeit erroneously, perceived in this way. The anthropocentric strain in Barth's writing lamentably represents much of Christian thinking, especially in its popular forms, as strongly in previous centuries as in the twentieth.¹⁸¹

The real reply to Nietzsche lies not in the reformulation of the old misinterpreted anthropocentric apologetic but in its liberation to speak of God as together Creator and incarnate and reconciler. For it is a fair question at the outset why man must be defined as "fellow humanity" in contrast to all other creatures, even those which share the same inner circle of creation as posited in Genesis 1. There is an inevitable arbitrariness with which Barth moves from consideration of fellow creatures in Part One to the largely exclusive focus on man in this Part Two. It is by no means clear at the beginning that the world of "real man" (with all its attendant ambiguity) should issue into the practical non-reality of non-human creatures.

180. Cf. "Man is absolutely not the crown of creation: every creature stands beside him at the same stage of perfection", Twilight of the Idols and The Anti-Christ, ET, intro. and comm. by R.J. Hollingdale, Penguin Classics (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974) p. 124. But when we inquire concerning the relative status of animals and men, we find that Nietzsche has taken over the scholastic/rationalist perception of Descartes that animals are machines, except that he extends the notion to include humans also: "our knowledge of man today is real knowledge precisely to the extent that it is knowledge of him as a machine", p. 124.

181. For example: "A reader who came fresh to the moral and theological writings of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries could be forgiven for inferring that their main purpose was to define the special status of man and to justify his rule over other creatures", Keith Thomas, Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500 - 1800 (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1984) p. 25. Thomas carefully documents the persistent anthropocentricity of Christian thinkers until the gradual emergence of some new sensibilities in the nineteenth century.

Thus even Barth's rounded definitions at this point are question-begging:

The humanity of Jesus consists in his being for man. From the fact that this example is binding in humanity generally there follows the broad definition that humanity absolutely, the humanity of each and every man, consists in the determination of man's being as a being with others, or rather with the other - man. It is not as he is for himself but with others, not in loneliness but in fellowship, that he is genuinely human, that he achieves true humanity, that he corresponds to his determination to be God's covenant-partner, that he is the being for which the man Jesus is, and therefore real man.¹⁸²

We cannot fail to notice the way in which the argument here moves backwards and forwards from familiar phrases but when each is analysed individually is seen to depend upon others for its coherence and meaning. Once a fundamental question mark is placed against any of these, the edifice collapses. Thus it is not clear how Jesus can be distinctly for man and not generally for all creatures as well. It is not clear why it is that fellow being cannot include all kinds of being and not just human being. It is not clear why man alone can be the covenant partner in the way supposed. Could it not be that Jesus may be more properly defined as the Creature for all other creatures, including those in closer and distant proximity, and that in being for all other creatures, man thus exercises his humanity in the sense intended here?

A question mark should also be placed against Barth's third definition especially that being in encounter (or relationship) consists "in the fact that we render mutual assistance in the act of being". Is mutual assistance in this sense to be exclusive of comradely care and help to other species, even those with whom we have special relationship and therefore special responsibilities? In reply, Barth may well stress the "mutual" in the proposition given and that at least some animals, as far as we know, are not capable of mutual assistance in this sense. But it is surely striking that the nature

182. CD, III, 2, p. 243; my italics.

of Barth's proposal here is closed to any wider claims for assistance. It presupposes what is in need of justification, namely that there exists a human fellowship which can be abstracted from our diverse and multifarious relationships with the natural world. And even if these relationships with the non-human cannot claim the primary concern which relationships with fellow humans may justly claim, it is by no means clear that they are not at least theologically significant as analogies to the same. Barth spoke earlier of how the beasts created on the sixth day with man prefigure the covenant relationship between man and God, and are they not even in this reduced sense morally significant relationships? Barth's method, however, pushes him to eliminate even this possibility of creaturely communion, for he writes of humanity which "consists in the fact that we need and are capable of mutual assistance".¹⁸³ Thus a further way in which the common life of creatures may be exemplified and expressed is abstracted as a necessarily exclusive human characteristic. In all this it is hardly surprising that Barth's work on creation should be regarded as his "weakest" by some of his critics who understand him as espousing "unitarianism of the second article" (through "Christo-centric constriction") by excluding an account of "not only the psychological but also the cosmic".¹⁸⁴ Barth's closely Christo-centrally based discussion here does little to avoid criticism of this kind.

Human Sexual Difference as the Basis of the Covenant Relationship

The third sub-section of the third major section is entitled 'Humanity as Likeness and Hope' (Menschlichkeit als Gleichnis und Hoffnung). Barth begins by recapitulating his major theme that the "basic form of humanity is fellow-humanity", and moreover, "if it is not in some way an approximation to being in the encounter of I and Thou, it is not human". This, for Barth, is not an ideal quality or virtue of humanity, it is rather one of the determinations with which we have to deal in theological anthropology and therefore

183. CD, III, 2, p. 262; my italics.

184. Hendry, op. cit., p. 25.

has the nature of "fact". No matter how man may reject, dishonour or misconstrue it, at heart man has no choice but to be fellow humanity. "His being has this basic form".¹⁸⁵

Barth develops his view with reference to the J saga in Genesis which he regards as the "Old Testament Magna Carta of humanity". Put simply, what we have in this saga is the "radical rejection" of the picture of man in isolation.¹⁸⁶ The relationship of man and woman here described "speaks of the co-existence" between them "as the original and proper form of this fellow humanity".¹⁸⁷ Barth holds that the Genesis picture reveals a true and vital distinction within humanity, one that cannot be lost. He therefore interprets the Pauline verse in Galatians 3, concerning how there is neither male nor female in Christ, in a way that maintains the distinction. "Thus the fact that male and female are one in Christ does not mean that they are no longer male and female", he argues. This distinction belonging as it does to human nature (rather than to the despoliation of it) will not be "set aside in the resurrection" and therefore relates inherently to what man is and can only be here or in eternity.¹⁸⁸

Pondering as before (see previous discussion pp. 53f.; 76f.; 82f.; 92f.) the significance of this positing of humanity as male and female, Barth sees behind it a prefiguring of the relationship between Yahweh and his people. This is the true "original" relationship, to which the human prototype points. When Paul interprets the Christian community, he draws upon the Old Testament notion of God and his people, but also develops a unique Christological emphasis. Hence he writes to the community of Jesus Christ, people who stand in an ontological relationship to him, and therefore to God himself.

185. CD, III, 2, p. 286.

186. CD, III, 2, p. 291 and n. p. 291.

187. CD, III, 2, p. 292.

188. CD, III, 2, p. 296 and n. p. 296.

The Church is seen as the bride and Christ as the head or husband of the community. Thus within the male/female relationship itself the man represents Christ and the woman "is subordinated to her husband as the whole community is to Christ".¹⁸⁹ Barth regards this priority of order as having nothing to do with cultural relativism or social fashion. Indeed here is disclosed the true theological significance of human relationships. "Dishonour and harm are done both to man and to woman if this clear relationship is abolished", he writes.¹⁹⁰ From this standpoint, Barth is able to share with Paul the notion that we are here confronted by "a great mystery" (Eph. 5:32). The humanity of man is a "mystery of faith", he argues, for behind all earthly notions of relationship and difference, of duality and unity, lies the prefiguring reality of Christ in relation to us. Barth concludes that man is concretely within his humanity nothing less than the covenant partner of God. We can now say that man is "by nature" such a covenant partner. The image of God in man consists pre-eminently in this tertium comparationis, this analogy of relationship, indeed "apart from this common feature everything is different".

The Significance of Sexual Difference in Non-Human Creatures

How secure is Barth's edifice here? He offers without doubt the fullest theological account possible of sexual differentiation. Given his presuppositions it must follow that any differentiation or differentiated relationship within man must find its correspondence and analogy in the relationship between God and man, and even more directly within the life of God himself. The argument is less secure, however, at the point at which he wishes to deduce from this analogy the total reality of human distinctiveness. When he writes "For apart from this common feature (analogy of relationship) everything is different", he stretches a possibly compelling case to the point of exaggeration.¹⁹¹

189. CD, III, 2, n. p. 314.

190. CD, III, 2, n. p. 312.

191. CD, III, 2, p. 320; my italics.

We need to emphasise again two major problems. In the first place, Barth does not grapple with the fact of sexual differentiation and plurality in other species. He does not ignore the fact since the sagas implicitly assume such differentiation, but he proposes a distinction that human sexuality is different in kind from other sexual differentiation within creation. We are now in a position to observe the full circularity of this approach: in Part One the divine image means sexual differentiation; in Part Two sexual differentiation means being made in the divine likeness. Secondly, since the essence of Barth's argument is the analogy of relationship, he does not grapple theologically with the fact that man exists in a relationship with creation as a whole and other living beings in particular. If relationship is to be the central determining factor here in distinguishing the humanity of man, it cannot be overlooked that man's relationship with other creatures betokens correspondence and analogy in a similar way.

If our criticisms are right, two conclusions follow. The first is that man in his I and Thou relationship may be to other creatures as God is to him.

If Christ is for man, then man must be for creation and therefore for them in a particular and unique way. The analogy of relationship must in this sphere betoken inner theological reality as it does in the divine human relationship. Man's relationship must actualise and express the inner reality of God's beneficence towards all created being. How can this be so? It must be affirmed because of the underlying ontological relationship between Christ and every creature. Since man is set within other differentiating relationships, there can be no single relationship with man that does not enfold and include man as he is within these other relationships. Barth cannot escape the fact that man is man as he is fellow human as he is creature among fellow creatures. There can be no humanity outside this context and sphere; to abstract man in the way supposed is to deny his creaturehood and therefore his full humanity.

The second conclusion that must follow is this: all creaturely life that is sexually differentiated must be prefigured by the inner life of God himself. Not all of course in the same way or to the same degree. Man here undoubtedly stands at the very centre because of the incarnation. But if sexual plurality signifies an analogical relationship there can be no grounds for affirming it in the human sphere which do not also affirm it in the non-human sphere as well. Barth's argument in this regard is tenuous to say the least. He regards human sexuality as undefined "structural differentiation" which is absent in the case of animals. Sexuality in animals amounts to a "non-essential" differentiation whereas for man it is a sign of what he is.¹⁹² But this will not do because the issue concerns not being in essence but relationship. There is no analogy of being, but only analogy of relationship. Is it really so astonishing that there should also be some likeness of relationship between Creator and creation, even among the non-human creatures? Barth's way of seeking to find the one human point of absolute distinction is not easily compatible with the biblical notion that Christ is the "first born of every creature" and "in him all things consist".¹⁹³ If Christ is truly the source of all being, and therefore the sure ontological basis not only of man but all creatures, then it must follow that there is some analogy of relationship not only specifically between human beings, but between all beings possessing this prior relationship and correspondence. Whatever special significance may be attached to humankind it cannot be such that it totally obliterates this primary and decisive relation to all creaturely being. It is said of Barth that he is "committed to one coherent framework of theological thought that arises

192. CD, III, 2, p. 286.

193. For exegesis of Col. 1. 12-17 see, e.g. Jean-Francois Bonnefoy's Christ and the Cosmos, ed. and ET by M.D. Meilach (Paterson, N.J.: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1965) p. 180f. "We take St. Paul's assertion literally: God has willed that Christ be first in 'all things'. And he leads all things, those in heaven and those on earth, to unity through him and toward him", p. 194.

within the unitary interaction of God with our world in creation and incarnation".¹⁹⁴ As such it is a promise unfulfilled at least here. Barth's mistake is to assume that man's special relationship with Christ can only be supported and maintained at the expense of the wider relationship between Creator and creation.

All this, however, does not answer the question what it means for man to be man for Christ, and therefore for other creatures in creation. We intend to give some account of this possibility in our last chapter (see esp. pp. 302-310).

Man as Besouled Body, Bodily Soul and Spirit

Barth turns to the question of the constitution of man in his fourth major section entitled 'Man as Soul and Body'. The first sub-section is entitled 'Jesus, Whole Man'. Until now the problem of man's being "in itself and as such" has concerned Barth, but he now turns to the problem of what constitutes this being in terms of body and soul. To what extent can man be defined as such a being? How does one begin this process of theological investigation? Which of the many possible starting points does one adopt?

For Barth there is only one answer. Only one source of understanding can be "authentic and normative" for theological investigation in this sphere and this source is the "constitution of the humanity of Jesus". But what is striking about the person of Jesus is the complete absence of duality. Certainly there is an inner and an outer, but "it is almost more striking and characteristic that everything has an outer, visible, bodily form".¹⁹⁵ Barth points out that those New Testament passages which mention the "soul" or "spirit" of Jesus "are comparatively rare in appearance and parsimonious in content".¹⁹⁶ This then is the first point Barth makes: Jesus' humanity

194. T.F. Torrance, Transformation and Convergence in the Frame of Knowledge: Explorations in the Interrelations of Scientific and Theological Enterprise (Belfast: Christian Journals Limited, 1984) p. 295.

195. CD, III, 2, p. 327.

196. CD, III, 2, n. p. 328.

is marked by "oneness and wholeness".¹⁹⁷ The second concerns the order of this reality. We perceive that it has a particular structure. Jesus is not subject to forces, one higher and one lower. He is not a chaos, a mass of conflicting wills and emotions. Rather "He is both soul and body in an ordered oneness and wholeness". And the cause of this unity is the "absolutely unique relation with the Holy Spirit" that appertains to Jesus.¹⁹⁸ Because the spirit of kingship rests upon Jesus, in a way that cannot be said of any other man, the result is a quite specific relationship of unity. Hence we can say of Jesus that "His body is the body of His soul, not vice versa".¹⁹⁹ The relationship between body and soul is, therefore, resolved in this one man Jesus - "so much so", adds Barth, "that one might miss the reality of their difference".²⁰⁰

In his second sub-section, 'The Spirit as the Basis of Soul and Body'. (Der Geist als Grund der Seele und des Leibes), Barth begins by expounding "the basic anthropological insight", namely that man has Spirit and is as such "grounded, constituted and maintained by God as the soul of his body".²⁰¹ Whilst God does not in any sense belong to the constitution of man, and whilst "God is neither a part nor the whole of human nature", and whilst further "He is identical neither with one of the elements of which in unity and order we are composed", it is nevertheless true that "the whole which we are in this unity and order is not without God". It is impossible for man to know or understand himself without reference to God. "Man cannot escape God", maintains Barth, "because he always derives from him". He is not therefore in any way "self-grounded, self-based, self-constituted and self-maintained". All anthropology without God "rests on a plain error".²⁰²

197. CD, III, 2, p. 331.

198. CD, III, 2, p. 332 and n. p. 332.

199. CD, III, 2, n. p. 339.

200. CD, III, 2, p. 340.

201. CD, III, 2, p. 344.

202. CD, III, 2, p. 346.

Barth amplifies what it means for man to be grounded and constituted by God. The fact of human death helps us to appreciate that the life of man does not stand in a fixed relationship to God but has the character of gift. "Man lives and dies in the event of the livingness of God", he argues. Only "in this event" is man what he is; he lives and dies by the gracious hand of God. "In this event and not otherwise!" exclaims Barth.²⁰³ What then does it mean for man to be "soul of his body"? In the first place, "he is simply one being among other visible material beings": his body is also physical (organic) as well as material. "To call man 'soul' is simply to say ... that he is the life which is essentially necessary for the body". "This is all we can mean", emphasises Barth. As will become clear, no notion of a disembodied, or partly disembodied, or sometimes disembodied soul is being entertained here. The notions of body and soul belong analytically together. One is impossible without the other. "Soul would not be soul", if it were not bodily; and body would not be body, if it were not besouled".²⁰⁴

But this alone is inadequate. "We introduce a concept which we earlier saw fundamental for an analysis of the human nature of Jesus", writes Barth, "the concept of spirit". Man "has spirit" (der Mensch hat Geist). But this does not mean that he "is spirit".²⁰⁵ In this way Barth secures at one and the same time both the continuity and the discontinuity between man and the humanity of Jesus. Jesus alone is Spirit, whereas for man generally the Spirit is a gift and not his own possession. "The Spirit is immortal", writes Barth. "For this reason it can be identical neither with the man nor with a part of the being of man".²⁰⁶ What then is Spirit? "Spirit is, in the most general sense, the operation of God upon His creation, and especially the movement of God towards man".²⁰⁷ Barth digs deeply at this point

203. CD, III, 2, p. 349.

204. CD, III, 2, p. 350.

205. CD, III, 2, p. 354.

206. CD, III, 2, n. p. 355.

207. CD, III, 2, p. 356.

into biblical anthropology in order to characterise the possession of Spirit in individuals as the possession of a "commission from God"; "God's authorisation and power for its execution".²⁰⁸ But the Spirit is necessary not only as the authorisation to be an agent of God but also as the "principle of (his) creaturely reality". That is, man cannot be body and soul without Spirit. He cannot, simply put, be man without it. Is solely humanity therefore, the receiver of the Spirit? Not at least in the sense that the Spirit is essential to life and since all created, that is living beings have life, they must also be counted as receivers of the Spirit. But what distinguishes man is the "special movement" (besondere Zuwendung) of God in giving the Spirit, that is, his determination to make man his covenant partner.²⁰⁹ "We know nothing of such a double determination in respect of the beasts", argues Barth, "and hence we do not understand the manner of their life or of their souls (though we cannot dispute that they have them) and at the very best can only intuit". Barth summarises the question: "Men and beasts can be born, but men alone can be baptised".²¹⁰

208. CD, III, 2, n. p. 357.

209. Zuwendung (movement) may be more accurately translated as 'turning towards' or more figuratively 'giving someone your attention'.

210. CD, III, 2, p. 359. When we reflect further on the precise meaning of Barth's proposed distinction here, all is less clear. C.F.D. Moule has shown convincingly how the early Christian community developed the "extraordinary conception of the Lord Jesus Christ as a corporate, a more-than-individual personality" into which believers entered through baptism, The Phenomenon of the New Testament: An Inquiry into the Implications of Certain Features of the New Testament, Studies in Biblical Theology, 2nd Series I (London: SCM Press, 1968) p. 21; cf. The Origin of Christology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) pp. 47 - 96. But this community also developed the extraordinary conception of Christ as Logos through whom all things came to be and were alive with his life. Is not this also a real incorporation? The missing link here is the operation of the Holy Spirit. Barth does not begin to grapple with what sanctification of all creation through the Spirit might mean. Torrance offers this description wrestling with St. Basil's doctrine of the Spiritus Creator: "Not only is the work of the Spirit in Christ the norm of his work in all creation, but the saving means of it, and the sole way through which it is fulfilled by God; i.e. through the Son and in the Spirit", Theology in Reconstruction, op. cit., p. 222; his italics.

Barth now defines more precisely what is meant by man having Spirit. He offers four delimitations. In the first place, it means that "God is there for him".²¹¹ It cannot mean, of course, that man is of the divine essence. Rather the Spirit witnesses that God stands in relation to him as his gracious Creator. Secondly it means that man is determined "as soul of his body". The Spirit is the centre of man. But it must not be interpreted as a third side of human reality. The Council of Constantinople (AD 869-70) was right to reject "the so-called trichotomism espoused by Philo, by Apollinarius in the Christological conflict of the fourth century".²¹² The Spirit is not a third entity or being in man. Thirdly, the indwelling Spirit in man makes us posit a close intimacy, a real presence of God in man: again, however, "while He is in man, He is not identical with him".²¹³ Fourthly, within the nexus of body and soul, the Spirit has "a special and direct relationship to the soul or soulful element of human reality". The soul as the life of man relates primarily to the Spirit without which it could not be. "The soul is a priori the element in which the turning of God to man and the fellowship of man with God in some way take place." The same may be said of the body but that only indirectly, and "only a posteriori", concludes Barth.²¹⁴

The Soulless Non-Human?

Once again, Barth is convinced, as much if not more than in previous sections, that he can discover the distinctive nature of man. He writes:

Just as man is distinguished from the rest of the created world by the fact that, as the likeness and promise of the divine covenant of grace, he is called to responsibility before God, so his special constitution, corresponding to this calling, is determined by the fact that he owes it to the God who is Lord of this covenant of grace.²¹⁵

211. CD, III, 2, p. 262.

212. CD, III, 2, n. p. 355.

213. CD, III, 2, p. 264.

214. CD, III, 2, p. 365.

215. CD, III, 2, p. 347; my italics.

What is then this "special constitution"? Firstly, man is a soul of his body. He is therefore "one who also belongs to the visible, outward, earthly world of bodies". He is a material body and his soul is the life appropriate for it. Barth adds to this the significant idea that man represents the creation in his own being as body and soul. "The whole man ... " he writes, is "a representation of the whole cosmos".²¹⁶ As Barth sees it, the covenant relationship in which man stands makes this inevitable and necessary. Secondly, man has Spirit which in turn is the basis of his body and soul. What then properly distinguishes man and beast - body, soul or Spirit? Barth's answer is telling and needs to be reproduced in full:

In this sense Spirit is the conditio sine qua non of the being of man as soul of his body. There is value in reminding ourselves, of course, that the same is also said of the beasts. It is only by the Spirit of God the Creator that they also live and are soul of their body. What distinguishes man from the beast is the special movement and the purpose with which God through the Spirit gives him life; and, connected with this, the special spirituality of his life, which is determined by the fact that God not only made him in his constitution as soul of his body, but destined him in this constitution for that position of a partner of the grace of His covenant. We know nothing of such a double determination in respect of the beasts ...²¹⁷

Barth's argument is again plainly circular. The distinctive nature of man consists in his constitution - it is posited - but when analysed Barth admits no fundamental distinction of constitution, only of divine purpose which lies beyond issues of constitution. Thus once again the only fundamental distinction proposed is that of covenant partnership. It is only on this basis that any second layer of distinction is proposed. Ironically, therefore, Barth rests at the very point where his thesis is weakest. When he writes "We know nothing of such a double distinction in respect of beasts", that is, their election within the divine covenant, could he really have overlooked again that Genesis 9 expressly includes non-human beings? Barth's subsequent claim, for example that we do not understand the "manner

216. CD, III, 2, p. 351.

217. CD, III, 2, p. 359; my italics.

of their life" and that "so far as we know, they lack that second determination ... which is primary and peculiar" has, therefore, a hollow ring. The very category by which we may advance an understanding of the life of beasts and our relationship with them has been taken from us.

The puzzle is developed further by Barth's own exegesis of the Old Testament which supports the conviction that soul and spirit cannot be rightly denied to beasts as well as humans. They too are expressly "living beings" whose gift of life is a mark of the indwelling Spirit. This accepted, the meaning and significance of such determination is left entirely to one side. We may put the problem in the form of a question: If, as Barth argues, the Spirit must rightly be defined in terms of God's operation and activity within creation and if the being of man and other living creatures consists not in their constitution as such but rather in the purpose of God which may be understood in terms of his operation in relation to them, why is it that the purpose of God represented and signified by the fact of their gift of Spirit-filled life does not merit further attention and exploration?

Similarly when we ask in what way man may "represent the cosmos" - in the striking way in which Barth proposes it - the answer unfortunately is very unclear.²¹⁸ This is simply because he characterises the notion of soul and

218. Although Barth rejects the notion that man is a 'microcosm' of creation, this idea appears similar to the notion of representation which he sometimes employs but nowhere defines. The Eastern tradition provides rich suggestive cosmologies in this respect. "According to St. Maximus", writes Lossky, "the work of creation contains five divisions, from which are derived concentric spheres of being, at whose centre is man, virtually containing them all in himself". It is the destiny of man to bring this whole creation as well as himself to the state of deification willed by God, The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church, op. cit., p. 108. Cf. "Salvation by means of a flight out of the world, an escape of the spirit from the world, will appear as a limitation or spiritualistic deformation. In reality we are dealing with a way of salvation which does not tear us out of the world but is rather opened for this created world, in the Word become flesh", Lossky on the significance of materiality in the Eastern tradition, The Vision of God, ET by Asheleigh Moorhouse, pref. by J. Meyendorff, The Library of Orthodox Theology (London: The Faith Press and Clayton, Wisconsin: American Orthodox Press, 1963) p. 58; his italics.

Spirit in terms that do not allow his striking possibility to emerge as a subject for further discussion. His "delimitations" on what it means for man to have Spirit are advanced in abstraction from the operation of the Spirit in creation. The first, for example, that man having Spirit "means that God is there for him" does not wrestle with the fact that animals too have Spirit and thus with the obvious corollary that God is there for them also. The same problem arises with the third delimitation, namely that "since man has Him, the Spirit is certainly in man". But if the indwelling Spirit is the basis of man's life it must also ipso facto be the same for other living beings. In what way can man as postulated represent the cosmos and other living beings if the nature of his being is constantly in contrast or opposition to them? This is not to deny the possibility of special gifts or closer relationships with the Spirit, but these would be more convincingly advanced on the basis of the common possession of the Spirit by all living creatures. In fact, despite Barth's claim to differ from Christian tradition in his treatment of the soul, his intent here at least is tellingly similar to that of Aristotle, Augustine and Aquinas. According to Aristotle only man has the full complement of 'soul' in all its parts and specifically only "man and possibly another order like man or similar to him, the power of thinking, i.e. mind".²¹⁹ Notice Aristotle does not deny souls or even "psychic powers" to animals but only the fullness of soul. It is this crucial distinction, based in fact on purely speculative philosophy, that has come to dominate Christian thinking until the present day.

Man's Rationality as the Basis of Soulfulness

In his final three sub-sections of his fourth major section, Barth examines soul and body in their "interconnexion", in their "particularity", and finally in their "order". Barth ascribes an overall priority to the soul;

219. Aristotle, On the Soul, Book II, Ch. 3, 414a (28) - 415a (10); reprinted in Animal Rights and Human Obligations, ed. by Tom Regan and Peter Singer (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1976) p. 54. By "another order" Aristotle does not mean sub-humans like animals.

as we shall see later, but is clear that no notion of man as only a soul or try to do this", he maintains, for "Soul is life. What is lifeless is soulless". Can we say this even of plants and animals? In principle Barth appears happy so to do. But he is equally insistent that in doing this we move from the realm of knowledge to that of surmising and speculation. "What we mean when we speak of soul, we can strictly know only when we speak of the human soul".²²⁰ We do not know whether plants or beasts are capable of knowing themselves as a conscious subject "because the beast cannot tell me anything about it".²²¹ Only humans then and possibly animals can have an "organic body", that is one that is "besouled and filled and controlled by independent life".²²² As for plants, whether they have the subject necessary for soulful life is open to question.

Three vital "delimitations" are drawn in order to secure man as a unity of body and soul. Firstly, there is the flat rejection of "the abstractly dualistic conception" which may be called the Greek view and which has been taken to be traditional Christian teaching in this matter. According to this perspective, man possesses two parts, one soul which is immortal and one body which is perishable. These two "substances are quite different and even opposed in nature, and this involves an opposition of the worth of the one (the soul) to the unworthiness of the other (the body)".²²³ It is of course in the rationality of man, in his capacity for rational thought and reflection, that the immortality of the soul is discerned. Secondly, Barth also rejects the materialist "reactions" to this view, the first of these being "monistic materialism". According to this perspective, "the real is only what is corporeal, spatial, physical and material".²²⁴

220. CD, III, 2, p. 374.

221. CD, III, 2, pp. 374/5.

222. CD, III, 2, p. 378.

223. CD, III, 2, p. 380.

224. CD, III, 2, p. 382.

As a reaction to the dualism of traditional Christian teaching, it is understandable. As Barth writes: "They would be right if only they did not want to be exclusively right". However, since "they want to be exclusively right" they are necessarily erroneous.²²⁵ In an exhaustive footnote he deals at length with the unfortunate history of Christian theology in the area. Materialist thinking is not a modern phenomenon but a necessary reaction to the uncritical acceptance of dualistic thinking by Catholic and also in turn by Protestant thinkers. Calvin should have distanced himself from the prevailing Catholic view at the time of the Reformation, but instead by taking on board the traditional dialectic, the Reformers together with their Catholic counterparts have secured the rise of the considerable materialist reaction in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Materialist thinking has its origins not "in the researches and results of biology and physiology, but in the rise of this form of humanity (the emergence of soulless, industrial, automated man brought about by the great industrial upheavals of two centuries), in which everyone who lives with open eyes in and with his time must willingly or unwillingly recognise a little of himself".²²⁶ In this respect Barth sees the necessary emergence of the "historical materialism" advocated by Marx. This comprises four primary presuppositions: first that economic history wholly determines man and his relationships with others; secondly that as a critique of previous history it construes history as "a struggle between the ruling and the ruled strata or classes of the community"; thirdly, as a prediction of history it forecasts the inner movement of forces to catastrophe and renewal; and fourthly, as a summons to consciousness and action in the light of this forthcoming event. This economic ideology is a sign of the failure of Christian apologetics in its advocacy of a false doctrine

225. CD, III, 2, p. 383.

226. CD, III, 2, n. p. 387.

of man. Because Marxism has identified itself with at least half a truth of anthropology, it has maintained at least half a cutting edge. It should not surprise the Christian Church that it is denounced as a "relic of capitalism" when it has done nothing "positively to prevent the rise of the figure of soulless man". "Has it not always stood on the side of the 'ruling classes'?" asks Barth. "And has it not with its doctrine of body and soul at least shown a culpable indifference towards the problem of matter, of bodily life, and therefore of contemporary economics?"²²⁷ Unless the Church revises its anthropology at this very point, it will have nothing to say to the masses. To this needs to be added a third delimitation against the counter-reaction of "monistic spiritualism" which holds that "the soul is the one and only substance of human reality".²²⁸ Again as a reaction to counter-reaction it is quite understandable. It is not totally erroneous. But at heart it rests upon an assumption of its own making. "Who or what justifies this basic ontic and noetic assumption?" Real man is not soul "without conditions or limits", he writes.²²⁹

Barth now takes up the second question of body and soul in their particularity. "It concerns the inner differentiation of human creatureliness", he writes, for whereas if we were dealing with the question of the soul of animals we could legitimately stop at this point, we are bound in the case of humans to grasp more securely the precise nature of the interconnection between body and soul. For these two entities do not relate to substances at all. Rather they are "two moments" of creaturely reality. He offers two presuppositions. Firstly, "man is capable of perceiving the God who meets and reveals Himself to him". Almost the whole of Barth's theological anthropology presupposes this. "If God created him to have his being in His Word and as His partner, it is already decided that He created him

227. CD, III, 2, n. p. 389.

228. CD, III, 2, p. 390.

229. CD, III, 2, p. 391.

as a percipient being". If we ask what it means that man perceives God, the answer proposed is that perception involves by definition reception into the self-consciousness of the perceiver. "He can be aware of another and think it", summarises Barth. Such awareness may be possible in animals but "we do not know whether they think". Hence it is possible to generally distinguish the role of the soul and the body respectively in their different functions of awareness and self-consciousness. In passing Barth reverses the traditional argument from natural theology. Beginning with the assumption that man can and does perceive God, he argues that it is "For this reason his nature, and he himself as soul of his body, is rational nature". It is this, and not any autonomous rationality, which "marks him off from the animals and the rest of creation".²³⁰ The second presupposition is that man chosen as God's covenant partner cannot only perceive him but is called to be active in "self reflective responsibility before Him".²³¹ The life between God and man is characterised not only by knowledge but active fellowship. Again, Barth does not know whether animals are active, that is desiring, willing beings in this sense. We may speculate about this but only in the case of man can we know.²³² We may differentiate in this question of activity two aspects, one of desiring which belongs to the body (and which is largely passive) and the other of willing and attitude which belongs to the soul (and which in turn is largely active). Barth establishes this distinction again negatively from the case of animals. "What distinguishes man from animals and the rest of creation", he writes in a lengthy footnote, "is that he (man) can desire and will in relation to God".²³³

230. CD, III, 2, n. p. 402.

231. CD, III, 2, p. 406.

232. CD, III, 2, p. 407.

233. CD, III, 2, p. 409. Barth closely follows the tradition in delineating propensities in which the soulful capacity may be said to exist. Here he appears to take over Calvin's categories completely: "Thus let us, therefore, hold ... that the human soul consists in two faculties, understanding and will", Institutes of the Christian Religion, ed. J.T. McNeill, ET by F.L. Battles, The Library of Christian Classics (London: SCM Press, 1961) Vol. XX, Books I.i to III xiv, p. 194.

Barth concludes his treatment of the body and soul by an examination of their inner order. What is meant by the "primacy of the soul" is described in terms of "an intelligibly ordered association of these two moments".²³⁴ Hence man is a rational being (Vernunftwesen) in the most comprehensive sense. There is no evidence that animals are rational beings in this way. The only basis on which we are able to confirm, indeed prove, man's rationality at this point is "because he is addressed as such by God".²³⁵ Such a conclusion can only be deduced a priori from theology. "As God addresses man, he treats him as a being who can rule himself and serve himself. He thus treats him as a rational being", maintains Barth.²³⁶ There is no possibility of neutrality here: either man responds to the claim made upon him by God and thus perceives his own rationality before him, or else he loses himself.

The Switch to Naturalistic Criteria

The question of the status of animals requires elaboration. Even though he had previously accepted that the Old Testament gives us no grounds for denying soul or Spirit to animals, Barth is surprisingly reticent here. He begins by defining soul as "life, self-contained life, the independent life of a corporeal being". But not every corporeal being is alive in this sense. Then there is the obvious difficulty with plants. We cannot know whether plants are capable of determined self-movement, whereas man and beast are clearly "independent life". Can we therefore conclude that animals too have souls in the sense intended here? Barth answers:

... we must make the qualification that, although we recognise the life of the beast as such, we do not know but can only surmise or suspect that it is an independent life, the life of a specific subject. The life of man, and man alone, is for us the object of true and direct knowledge. What we mean when we speak of soul, we can strictly know only when we speak of the human soul.²³⁷

234. CD, III, 2, p. 413.

235. CD, III, 2, p. 422.

236. CD, III, 2, p. 424.

237. CD, III, 2, p. 374; my italics.

Barth is most vexing here. His position logically embraces animal souls at this point. For if "independent" self-willed life is to be the criterion, there is no other option. And yet he speaks of how we "must make the qualification ... ". And that we cannot know in the case of animals. But why? Barth replies:

Soul is independent, the life of a particular subject. I know it as such independent life as I know myself ... Whether the beast is engaged in such self-knowledge (Selbsterkenntnis) or is even capable of it, I cannot know, because the beast cannot tell me anything about it.²³⁸

When pressed then Barth's answer is not that independent life is the criterion for the attribution of souls but self-knowledge of independent life. Such beings have to be able to communicate to Barth their self-knowledge in order that in turn he may know. Do animals, we may wonder, have to communicate knowledge of their own bodily sensations in order for Barth to know if they too have a body? The difficulty here is not the evidently circular nature of the argument (for who can speak in a language Barth would understand but other human beings?) but that he slips from theological to naturalistic criteria. All his previously painstakingly established points must show him to be in error at this point. For it is not what we think of the created order, Barth previously stressed, but what we can know from the self-disclosure of God in Christ Jesus. Previously in offering exegesis of the creation sagas, he pointed directly to the creation of independent non-human life and also to the biblical witness which gives us no grounds for denying soul or Spirit to animals - indeed the reverse. Why then should Barth be so apparently inconsistent? Is there a deeper reason for reticence at this point?

At the very beginning of Part Two, Barth had drawn attention to the need to depart from dogmatic tradition concerning "the so-called soul". He does

238. CD, III, 2, pp. 374/5; my italics.

this subsequently with reluctance but boldness. This tradition, especially in the thought of Augustine and Aquinas, makes a sharp distinction between the souls of men and animals on the basis of man's reason and capacity for rational thought. The similarity between these approaches and the view now advanced by Barth in this section is unmistakable. It is "because there is in man a rational soul", writes Augustine, "(that) he subordinates to the peace of the rational soul all that part of his nature which he shares with beasts, so that he may engage in deliberate thought". Thus rational capacity becomes the absolute dividing line between animals and man. Augustine theologises that God "did not wish the rational being, made in his own image, to have dominion over any but irrational creatures".²³⁹ God's image in man therefore comes to consist in man's special rational capacities and with it the right to rule over other creatures with absolute power. A point systematically expressed by Aquinas who argues that "intellectual creatures are ruled by God, as though he cared for them for their own sake, while other creatures are ruled as being directed to rational creatures". The upshot morally cannot be advantageous to irrational brutes. "(I)t is not wrong for man to make use of them, either by killing or in any way whatever", claims Aquinas.²⁴⁰ Barth here slips from his own theological presuppositions to embrace the sheerly naturalistic or rationalistic conceptions of soulfulness which have so characterised scholastic attitudes especially in their unwitting denigration of animal life.

The Neglect of Materiality

Barth's strident and yet deeply sympathetic discussion of dialectical materialism as a judgement upon the Church's failure to prevent the "rise of that figure of the soulless man" needs to be explored further. His treatment

239. Augustine, Concerning the City of God against the Pagans, ET by H. Bettenson, intro. by D. Knowles, Penguin Classics (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972) pp. 873 and 874.

240. Aquinas, Summa Contra Gentiles, ET by the English Dominican Fathers (Chicago: Benziger Brothers, 1928) Third Book, Part II, Ch. CXII; reprinted in Animal Rights and Human Obligations, op. cit., pp. 56 and 59; my italics.

is perceptive and illuminating. He sees clearly the relationship between the view of man proposed by the Christian church and its effect upon social and moral thought. Has the church's traditional doctrine of human souls "at least shown a culpable indifference towards the problem of matter, of bodily life, and therefore of contemporary economics?"²⁴¹ And not only economics, we may ask? "Has it not made a point of teaching the immortality of the soul instead of attesting to society, with its proclamation of the resurrection of the dead, that the judgement and promise of God compass the whole man, and therefore cannot be affirmed and believed apart from material and economic reality, or be denied or pushed aside as ideology in contrast to material and economic reality?"²⁴² These valid questions invite others. Has not the traditional doctrine of man as alone the sure possessor of immortal soul (a view to which in principle Barth has now committed himself) meant in practice the depreciation of the world of matter generally and with it the realm of nature and living creatures as only automata devoid of rational souls and therefore moral status?²⁴³ Is there not a direct correspondence between the church's neglect in this way of the material and economic life of man, and its neglect of the material creation to which man is set in a position of responsible dominion? If

241. CD, III, 2, n. p. 389; my italics.

242. CD, III, 2, n. pp. 389/90; my italics. Cf. Berdyaev: "But it is because spirituality has been divorced from life and relegated to an abstract sphere that both human and religious life have become materialised. Materialism has, in fact, a spiritual origin", op. cit., pp. 177/8.

243. "Most people associate the theory of animal automatism with Descartes, but in fact it was Malebranche, not Descartes, who said that animals eat without pleasure and cry without pain. Descartes himself, whilst holding that animal bodies function mechanically, did not deny them feeling. His followers, however, took the theory of automatism to its limits, using it as an excuse for their tortures. 'They kicked about their dogs and dissected their cats without mercy, laughing at any compassion for them, and calling their screams the noise of breaking machinery'", A.R. Kingston, in op. cit., p. 485; the quotation is from J.P. Mahaffy, Descartes (London, 1901) p. 181. Tom Regan has recently indicated, however, that whilst Descartes allowed "sensation" to animals, his interpretation wholly eschewed any notion of "mind" and therefore of any real possibility of "consciousness", The Case for Animal Rights (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul and Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984) pp. 3 - 5.

Marxism "reminds the Church and theology of debts which they have by no means paid"²⁴⁴ is it not possible that the current disregard of our material environment, the claims of the non-human together with the supporting secular view of the world, remind the church and theology of other debts which they have by no means paid?

No Mind, Soul or Status?

Barth returns to the question of animal souls in pursuing the "particularity" of body and soul. We need to ask concerning "the inner differentiation" of human creatures. "We could very well halt here if we were merely dealing with an animal", claims Barth.²⁴⁵ But why? Why can we not speak of the inner differentiation of the life of all beings who have body and soul? He replies:

What we perceive in an animal is indeed the connexion of an independent life with that which is quickened and lives by it. The supposition that the animal, too, is soul of a body is tempting at this point. But as we have seen we do not know (wir wissen nicht) what we are really saying if we accept this supposition. We do not know the particular element in the independent life of an animal. We do not know how it happens that an animal is self-animating. Nor do we know the particularity in which it is both self-animating and living.²⁴⁶

The argument thus subtly changes. Barth does not now deny that animals have independent life or that there may be a particularity within such life that animates them in a way that is to human perception at least highly similar to that of human beings. The problem is now that we cannot know how they are animated or indeed the particularity which enables them to live at all. Barth's utter agnosticism at this point is surely untheological. He begins at this point with the crucial qualification "what we perceive ..." whereas previously Barth accepted that the Spirit must be the basis of all independent life. What has now happened to this insight? Do we really not know what gives life to the created world? Are there any grounds for assuming that the Spirit which quickens human life is not also the basis of all

244. CD, III, 2, n. p. 390.

245. CD, III, 2, p. 394.

246. CD, III, 2, pp. 394/5; my italics.

creaturely life, that is independently motivated life? "Not only is the Spirit reconciling fragmented factions of the human community to one another", according to Philip Rosato, "but He is also at work in the ecological forces of the earth which are straining as they wait for the revelation of the sons of God".²⁴⁷

Barth's thought moves through another transition. In a subsequent footnote on the creation of man in Genesis 2, he writes: "When God breathes His breath into the nostrils of man and thus makes him a living being, He seems to be doing materially the same thing as might be said of animals". So we do know then that the Spirit is the basis of animal as well as human life. "The material difference emerges only in the fact that the continuation of the story is the history of the covenant salvation ... between God and man".²⁴⁸

I have already discussed before the considerable difficulties with Barth's view at this point and I shall not repeat them here (see pp. 69 - 78).

What is distressing is the way in which he moves from criterion to criterion seeking to establish the special place and nature of man in distinction from that of animals, and yet when analysed how each criterion is presented in terms of others which in turn look back to the previous. What is the point of all this restless searching if he is really convinced by his material here?²⁴⁹

We move to yet another stage of attempted difference finding when Barth seeks to establish what follows from the particularity of body and soul in the

247. Rosato, The Spirit as Lord: The Pneumatology of Karl Barth (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1981) p. 140; see also my pp. 297f.

248. CD, III, 2, n. p. 396; my italics.

249. Barth's persistent agnosticism about the spirituality of animals may give us the uncomfortable feeling that he is not as free from spirit/matter dualism as he wishes to be. Can the Spirit only work through intelligent matter, one might ask? Ugly dualism, it should be remembered, still masquerades as Christian doctrine, e.g. "Soul and material substance, grace and transforming commodity must, however, be regarded as incompatibles", Oscar Hardman, The Christian Doctrine of Grace (London: The Unicorn Press, 1937) p. 43; my italics.

human creature. He proposes two qualities or rather "moments" of his creaturely reality. The first is that the human being "is capable of perceiving the God who meets and reveals Himself to him". As positive affirmation this insight cannot be gainsaid. But Barth advances this affirmation as a notion of distinction between man and animals. Can animals perceive their Creator and have some sense of their origin and creation as may be glimpsed from the biblical witness to their praise of God? Apparently not. Barth writes: "We believe that we can see and know that there is awareness in animals. But we do not know whether they think".²⁵⁰ Barth's argument here is amazingly similar to the rationalist approach of Descartes. "(I)f they thought as we do, they would have an immortal soul like us", claims Descartes. "(T)here is no prejudice to which we are all more accustomed from our earliest years than the belief that dumb animals think".²⁵¹ Whilst Barth stops short of actually denying mental capacities to animals, it is nevertheless problematic that he advances his argument not on the basis of agnosticism, but a practical denial of such a possibility.

We encounter inevitably the same problem with Barth's second "moment" of creaturely being, namely the ability to desire and will in relation to God. Are animals capable of such activity? Barth answers:

We think that we see and know that animals desire. But we do not know for certain that they will. Since we do not know this, fundamentally we do not know whether animal desire - however often human desire may remind us of it - is not something quite different. Thus we do not know whether and in what sense animals are active beings.²⁵²

250. CD, III, 2, p. 399.

251. Descartes, Letters to the Marquess of Newcastle (November 23, 1646) and to Henry More (February 5, 1649) in Descartes: Philosophical Letters, ed. and ET by Anthony Kenny (Oxford: University Press, 1970); see also 'Discourse on Method' in Philosophical Works of Descartes, ET by E.S. Haldane and G.R.T. Ross (London: Cambridge University Press, 1956) Vol. I, pp. 115 - 118 for his famous line about animals operating "just like a clock"; all reprinted in Animal Rights and Human Obligations, op. cit., pp. 60 - 66.

252. CD, III, 2, pp. 406/7; my italics.

But what does this "not knowing" amount to? An appreciation that animals may desire or will in some way hitherto unknown or undiscovered? Apparently not. To the ascribing of other moments of creaturely being that may be consonant with all else that is known about their creaturely being? Apparently not. The unknowing of animal life in this regard is turned into a statement of human distinctiveness, thus: "What distinguishes man from animals and the rest of creation is that he can desire and will in relation to God".²⁵³ It is here in the spilling over from agnosticism to outright denial that we expose a fundamental weakness in Barth's methodology.

The Final Void

And yet his thesis is all the more remarkable and extraordinary because in the end he senses something of the logical impossibility of the preceding arguments. When considering the order of body and soul in the human creature, he insists: "At this point we must again remember and maintain that we have no information whether animals are or are not also rational beings in the sense described".²⁵⁴ This, it must be noticed, follows agnosticism concerning the mental capacities of animals, the denial of their soulfulness and the distinguishing of man from the rest of the created order precisely on account of this unique ability to desire and will. And yet Barth maintains:

The evidence for this (man's rationality) cannot be used for both man and animals, nor of course for man against animals. It can be used only without reference to animals for man, and for man only as he conducts himself as a rational being.²⁵⁵

In the end, therefore, the puzzle of Barth's treatment here is only intensified by his candid assessment that the procedure he has followed cannot in the final analysis reveal the result advanced. We have therefore to unpick all the stages of argument concerning human distinctiveness and render the conclusions void. In this section at least the result is profound.

We cannot know whether beasts are soulful, but our not knowing on the basis

253. CD, III, 2, n. p. 409; my italics.

254. CD, III, 2, p. 419.

255. CD, III, 2, p. 420; my italics.

of what may or may not activate their life cannot be advanced against them. It remains an open question. We cannot know also whether animals can perceive their Creator because we cannot know either whether they perceive or think in that sense, but our unknowing cannot be advanced against them. It remains an open question. We cannot also know whether animals desire or will or both, and therefore in what sense they are active beings, but our unknowing cannot be advanced against them. All these questions remain necessarily open and all that has been built upon them in terms of human distinctiveness is rendered vacuous.²⁵⁶

The Trinitarian Weakness

One important lesson to be learnt from Barth's work on anthropology is that the attempt to define man in consistent opposition to creation, cannot in the end

256. It will be noted that I have not contributed to the general debate about the immortality of animal souls. Mainstream tradition rejects such a notion although serious voices have been raised in favour, e.g. "In 1722 the Spy Club at Harvard debated 'Whether the Souls of Brutes are Immortal', and as orthodox a divine as Bishop Butler thought it probable that brutes would enjoy an afterlife. Soame Jenyns concurred, as did the Methodist theologian Augustus Toplady", James Turner, Reckoning with the Beast: Animals, Pain and Humanity in the Victorian Mind (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1980) p. 8; for a sketch of the debate see Keith Thomas 'Animal Souls' in op. cit., pp. 137 - 142; of the divines John Wesley appears to offer the most considered account: "the whole brute creation will then undoubtedly be restored, not only to the vigour, strength, and swiftness which they had at their creation, but to a far higher degree of each than they ever enjoyed" from his famous sermon on 'The General Deliverance' in Sermons on Several Occasions, 4 vols., with biog. note by J. Beecham (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1874) Vol. II (1874) p. 282; more recently C.S. Lewis theorised that "animals may have an immortality, not in themselves, but in the immortality of their masters", The Problem of Pain, Fontana Books (London: Collins, 1967) pp. 127 - 8; see also his discussion 'On the Pains of Animals' with C.E. Joad, The Month, new series 3, 2 (February 1950) 95 - 104; more recently still Keith Ward posits "Immortality, for animals as well as humans, is a necessary condition of any acceptable theodicy", Rational Theology and the Creativity of God (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982) p. 202; cf. The Concept of God (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974) pp. 222 - 223; and the provocative, if slight, discussion by Edward Quinn, 'Animals in Heaven?', New Blackfriars, 65, 767 (May 1984) 224 - 226. Is the theory of incorporeal souls compatible with the doctrines of God as Creator, Reconciler and Redeemer? Does Barth engage here in a "cosmology" of man himself - that "sterile corner" where the "Word of God has yet to be heard"? What evidence is there from Jesus as "whole man" or from the biblical material generally to justify this scholastic pursuit - for humans or animals? If the creature is able to contain within itself the reason for its existence, can it still remain the creature?

give us an adequate account either of the doctrine of the human or the non-human. Even more glaringly, it cannot give us a full account of God as Trinity: of the exciting possibilities for the cosmos of the Father's love for all being, of the Son's world-embracing reconciliation, and the Spirit's work of inclusive redemption. The distinctions are so multiplied: history, gratitude, sexuality, willing and acting, rationality, covenant partnership and so on, that man's being as a fellow creature among other creatures in God's good creation is lost in a multitude of sophisticated abstractions. This is not a question of justice to our fellow creatures primarily (though many of the distinctions proposed would not bear analysis according to "exact science"²⁵⁷) but a question of fidelity to the Word who is the common source of all creatures and all creatureliness. If we have spent such a long time offering at every point an embracing and persistent critique of Barth's work here, it is for this very reason. He represents a tradition that urgently needs reworking. Even a theologian as different in method as Hans Küng is heir to the same thinking. Küng also takes anthropocentricity to its farthest possible limit and argues that God's will can be defined wholly in terms of man's well-being. "God wills nothing but man's advantage, man's true greatness and his ultimate dignity!"²⁵⁸

257. For recent discussions see Clark, The Nature of the Beast, op. cit.; Regan, op. cit., pp. 34- 81; Mary Midgley's Beast and Man: The Roots of Human Nature (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1979); Marian Stamp Dawkins' Animal Suffering: The Science of Animal Welfare (London and New York: Chapman & Hall, 1980) and Edward Carpenter's Animals and Ethics (London: Watkins, 1980). If Barth is to allow human perception of animals to form his theological judgement, then "exact science" must be allowed to play a part in determining our view of animal consciousness and behaviour. I like the line from Konrad Lorenz: "The similarity is not only functional but historical, and it would be an actual fallacy not to humanise", Letter to Williams, On Aggression, ET by M. Latzke (London: Methuen, 1966) p. 54; cited in Stephen R.L. Clark's The Moral Status of Animals (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1977) p. 38.

258. Küng, On Being a Christian, Fount ed. (London: Collins, 1978) p. 251; my italics.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE ETHICAL DEFICIENCY OF ANTHROPOCENTRIC DOCTRINE

Barth returns to the 'earthly' non-human creation¹ in Part Four of Volume Three, 'The Command of God the Creator'.² "The task of theological ethics is to understand the Word of God as the command of God".³ Ethics, in this sense, flows from doctrine; it is an inseparable part of our human response to the Revealed Word. Yet, from all that we have discovered so far, can we really expect from Barth a major treatment of human responsibility towards non-human creatures? If the Word of God is concerned solely "with God and man",⁴ how can the ethical dimension of man's relationship with animals have any theological force? Indeed Barth begins his section on 'Freedom for Life' with a wholly anthropocentric affirmation:

As God the Creator calls man to Himself and turns him to his fellow man, He orders him to honour his own life and that of every other man as a loan ...⁵

And yet it is surely significant that this section begins with a serious and sometimes detailed consideration of life in general and animals in particular.

The Non-Human as a Marginal Problem of Ethics

His sub-section borrows the term from Albert Schweitzer of 'Respect for Life' (Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben). In doing so he sharply differentiates

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1. The realm of non-being and the "ambassadors of heaven" are dealt with in CD, III, 3, The Doctrine of Creation, Part Three, ET by G.W. Bromiley and R. Ehrlich (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1960), esp. pp. 369 - 531.
 2. CD, III, 4, The Doctrine of Creation, Part Four, ET by A.T. Mackay, T.H.L. Parker, H. Knight, H.A. Kennedy and J. Marks (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1961). Barth's thought is closely paralleled here in his Ethics, op. cit., pp. 137 - 143. These lectures were never published during his lifetime because, according to the editor, Barth "appears in them as still an advocate of the doctrine of the orders of creation which later he passionately rejected" (p. vii). His thinking about respect for life has not substantially changed, however.
 3. CD, III, 4, p. 4.
 4. CD, III, 2, p. 6.
 5. CD, III, 4, p. 324 (sectional summary); my italics.

his intention from Schweitzer's overall thesis in Kultur und Ethik.⁶

Respect for life is not to be understood as the principle of ethics or as "the supreme good". "Where Schweitzer places life, we see the command of God".⁷ Whilst Barth attacks ethical idealism, the notion of respect must nevertheless be taken seriously. Man knows himself as he is addressed by God. He discovers himself as an independent, willing, thinking, conscious and responsible being. He knows that he exists in fellowship and communion with other human beings. In these ways he learns that his life is valuable, on loan from God and to be respected. And does the Word addressed to man enable him to discover himself as one being among other species of being? Can he find here too fellowship and unity? Barth agonises. A tempting possibility especially "if we were following the way of free speculation". But fidelity to the Word determines otherwise:

For it cannot be maintained that man addressed by God's word was spoken to and must recognise himself as a participant in the life of animals and plants or in an almost universal life-act, however interpreted.⁸

Theological ethics, therefore, cannot concern itself with a supposed world of animal and human fellowship. Whilst we cannot rule out the possibility absolutely, we cannot proceed on the basis of it. "We may entertain beautiful and pious thoughts, based sometimes on sensible suppositions and observations, concerning the independent reality of animal and vegetable existence ... (but) Man is not addressed concerning animal and vegetable life, nor life in general, but concerning his own

6. Kultur und Ethik (1923); Civilization and Ethics, ET by C.T. Campion, 2nd ed., Unwin Books (A and C Black, 1967). For a critical discussion see Oskar Kraus, Albert Schweitzer: His Work and his Philosophy, ET by E.G. Macalman, intro. by A.D. Lindsay (London: A and C Black, 1944).

7. CD, III, 4, n. p. 324.

8. CD, III, 4, n. p. 332.

human life." The conclusion is inevitable: "... we must take seriously the problem of animals (and in a certain sense even of plants) as a marginal problem of ethics" (Ethischès Randproblem).⁹

What then, if anything, can be said of animals and vegetables? Barth insists upon a distinction between the two. Animals apparently have some kind of claim to soulfulness, whereas vegetables have (if we know what we are talking of at all) some kind of "vegetative" soul. Whether we can apply to animals any kind of rationality is ultimately "an enigma".¹⁰ Yet there is a "close connexion" (Nachbarschaft) between man and beast and a relationship "so unmistakable" that we must put them "at the boundary" of concern for respect for life.¹¹ Barth offers eight pages of discussion.

Barth again begins by dissociating himself from the wider view of Schweitzer that ethics "is infinitely extended responsibility to everything that lives".¹² It is to say too much to claim that all life is "holy" (heilig). But how can Barth "justify" himself if he differs in this matter? What Schweitzer advocates, in any case, is not always possible, "we find ourselves at the extreme limit" of human generosity, and therefore what is proposed "cannot be understood as doctrine, principle and precept". And yet, Barth senses that Schweitzer has uncovered something telling. "Whatever the solutions proposed, the problem itself is important" (das mit ihr herausgestellte Problem ist wichtig).¹³ Barth's starting point is to accept that man must behave with responsibility. But responsibility to animals

9. CD, III, 4, n. pp. 332-3.

10. CD, III, 4, p. 348.

11. CD, III, 4, p. 349.

12. CD, III, 4, n. p. 349; Civilization and Ethics, op. cit., p. 215.

13. CD, III, 4, n. p. 350.

is not the same kind of responsibility as should be shown to other humans. "Only analogically" can we bring animals under the concept of respect for life. The right treatment of animals is not a primary human responsibility, but "a serious secondary responsibility" (eine ernsthafte sekundäre Verantwortlichkeit).¹⁴ It must be remembered that other living creatures form the background of life which makes human life possible as well. Man is set up as "lord on the earth which is already furnished with these creatures". Whilst animals do not belong to him, "(t)hey are provided for his use" (sie sind ihm zum Gebrauch übergeben). How do we know this? Our knowledge depends upon the distinction that humans alone are the creature "to whom God reveals, entrusts and binds Himself" thus making "common cause" between them. Again this lordship and responsibility is "a differentiated one" (eine differenzierte) in respect of animals and vegetables. The "primary meaning" of dominion is that man may use, exploit, harness and discipline other forms of life.¹⁵ In the case of plants, we may take this dominance for granted as sensible use of nature's superfluity. But in the case of animals, we are confronted with a different problem. "For the killing of animals, in contrast to the harvesting of plants and fruit, is annihilation". More specifically each animal is "a single being, a unique creature existing in individuality" (eines Einzelseins, eines einmalig, in einer Individualität existierenden Lebewesens).¹⁶ This means that what humans do to animals in slaughtering them is in principle very close to homicide. Have humans this right? Barth again agonises. He carefully reviews the biblical evidence. What are we to make of the sacrifice and use of animals on one hand and the prior command to desist

14. CD, III, 4, p. 350.

15. CD, III, 4, p. 351.

16. CD, III, 4, p. 352.

on the other? Barth's answer is similar to his conclusion concerning the nature of sacrifice in Part One. Man may offer the life of animals and kill them "as representations of his guilt" in sacrifice.¹⁷ But the freedom to use animals in this way and also for food does not correspond to "the true and original creative will of God" and therefore it "stands under a caveat".¹⁸ It may be justified only within the transitory and interim time between creation and consummation.

Barth's conclusion is that man may kill animals for food only under the "pressure of necessity" (Druck von Nötigung). This part of man's lordship is the most questionable, however. Barth is characteristically cautious. This right must not be regarded by man as "self-evident"; it must never become "a normal element in his thinking".¹⁹ Nevertheless, Barth's final paragraph stresses the sacrificial nature of lordship in the following way:

The slaying of animals is really possible only as an appeal to God's reconciling grace, as its representation and proclamation. It undoubtedly means making use of the offering of an alien and innocent victim and claiming its life for ours ... Man sins if he does it without this authorisation ... He must not murder an animal (Morden darf er auch das Tier nicht). He can only kill it, knowing that it does not belong to him but to God, and that in killing it he surrenders it to God in order to receive it back from Him as something he needs and desires ... The killing of animals, when performed with the permission of God and by His command, is a priestly act of eschatological character.²⁰

In a concluding note, before the discussion breaks off, Barth refers to Romans 8:19f. concerning the subjugation of animal life and its promise of redemption. The groaning and cries of the animal creation must be heard

17. CD, III, 4, n. p. 354.

18. CD, III, 4, n. p. 353.

19. CD, III, 4, p. 354. Nötigung is stronger than its translation "necessity". I have subsequently used "rigorous necessity" (p. 277) to make the point.

20. CD, III, 4, p. 355; my italics.

which are "the birth pangs of the new aeon". "A good hunter, honourable butcher and conscientious vivisectionist will differ from the bad" because they have heard these cries and exercise "an intensified, sharpened and deepened diffidence, reserve and carefulness". However, beyond rightful care of animals (which all should enjoin) it is proper that there should be a "radical protest" against this whole possibility. Nevertheless, "it may well be objected against a vegetarianism which presses in this direction that it represents a wanton anticipation (eigenmächtige Vorwegnahme) of ... the new aeon for which we hope".²¹

The Inadequacy of Barth's Treatment

We isolate four major areas of difficulty.

(1) The first concerns Barth's handling of the notion of "respect", or possibly more accurately, "reverence" for life.²² Of course Barth cannot accept the "mystical"²³ basis which Schweitzer seemingly propounds for it. Barth opposes the concept as "doctrine, principle or precept".²⁴ But the question is, did Schweitzer ever intend it to be understood that way? Many commentators, Barth included, have simply reacted against a position interpreted as inalienable moral law and rightly pointed to its practical impossibility.²⁵ But the evidence from Schweitzer's own life is overwhelmingly against this. He was not, for example, a consistent vegetarian or even a vegan, he accepted the necessity of some experimentation on

21. CD, III, 4, n. pp. 355-6.

22. Ehrfurcht from Furcht (fear) and Ehre (honour, praise, dignity); "reverence" maintains the element of awe present in the German.

23. CD, III, 4, n. p. 324.

24. CD, III, 4, n. p. 350.

25. E.g. F.R. Barry, Christian Ethics in a Secular Society (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1966), p. 246; cf. George Seaver, "Schweitzer's compassionate concern for all the lowly orders of creation has been carelessly misconstrued as a claim for the absolute inviolability of life of every kind under any circumstances", Albert Schweitzer: Christian Revolutionary (London: A and C Black, 1955) p. 90.

animals and even went to some lengths to dispose of poisonous insects.²⁶ When confronted by these facts, many of Schweitzer's critics simply write him off as inevitably inconsistent. But the truth of the matter appears to be that reverence for Schweitzer meant primarily: attitude, disposition, effort of the will and thankfulness.²⁷ What Schweitzer meant by describing all life as "holy", or more accurately "sacred", turns vitally on the beholder's attitude to that which is apprehended.²⁸ More directly the actual moral position advocated by Schweitzer is undeniably close to that of Barth. For Barth only rigorous necessity justifies animal slaughter. How different is that from the approach advocated by Schweitzer? "Whenever I injure life of any sort, I must be quite clear whether it is necessary. Beyond the unavoidable, I must never go, not even with what seems insignificant."²⁹

The basic cleavage, however, is that even accepting a similarity in this respect between the two writers, Barth cannot in the end accept respect as extending to animal life without heavy qualification. His discussion of animals marks off a digression from the primary purpose of his section. Non-human sentient beings lie only at the "boundary" of that respect which is obligatory in relation to human beings. This is made more extraordinary still by Barth's previous insistence that the "animal impulses" of man (menschlich-animalische Impulse)³⁰ "should be given their rights (zu seinem Recht kommen lassen) within their essential limitations", that is

26. See, e.g., James Brabazon, Albert Schweitzer: A Biography (London: Gollancz, 1976) pp. 255f.

27. Schweitzer, Reverence for Life, ET by R.H. Fuller, foreword by D.E. Trueblood (London, SPCK, 1970) esp. pp. 89-100; 118-126; 127-142.

28. CD, III, 4, n. p. 349; Civilization and Ethics, op. cit., p. 214; even "sacred" may be too much in context, the question issues on the movement of feeling rather than the claim of the object, as Schweitzer's illustrations show, pp. 214-5.

29. Schweitzer, Civilization and Ethics, op. cit., p. 221.

30. Literally: "human animal(istic) impulses"!

that human bodily desires should be given their proper due.³¹ Accepting the terminology of modified mind/body dualism within which Barth appears to work here, are we then to suppose that human bodies (as differentiated from human souls or personalities) can make proper moral claims upon us whereas the bodies of probably soulful animal individuals cannot?

(ii) The second difficulty lies in Barth's refusal to acknowledge any kind of man-animal fellowship or unity. Perhaps he is simply side-tracked by his aversion for the Idealists with their predilection for speaking of "life forces" and the like.³² Perhaps Barth is conscious of the potentially competing evolutionary evidence at this point. At one level it appears entirely reasonable to affirm that "the Word of God is addressed to man" (das Wort Gottes richtet sich an den Menschen),³³ and thereby to point to the singularity and centrality of man's place in the cosmos. Once again as positive exposition there is little to argue with. But further on, in a method now only too familiar, this positive insight is coupled with negative implication:

He who in the biblical message is called God is obviously not interested in (offenkundig ... nicht interessiert) the totality of things and beings created by Him, nor in specific beings within this totality, but in man ...³⁴

Such a judgement, as we have seen, can only be made at the expense of a full Christological understanding. It severs the Word as the content of God's self-communication to the world from the world which is the continual expression of God's creative Word.

(iii) Thirdly, it is not surprising that Barth typifies man's relationship

31. CD, III, 4, p. 347. Cf. Dietrich Bonhoeffer on 'The Right to Bodily Life', Ethics, ed. by E. Bethge, ET by N.H. Smith (London: SCM Press, 1955) pp. 131-141.

32. See CD, III, 4, n. p. 326.

33. CD, III, 4, n. p. 332.

34. CD, III, 4, p. 337; my italics.

with the non-human as a "marginal problem" of ethics. He wants on one hand to acknowledge "a serious problem" but on the other to see it only in "secondary" terms. He thus brushes aside those various intimations from Genesis of something more fundamental. The responsibility implicit in the giving of dominion over creation is not to be seen as primary. The twin determinations of man described in the second saga pointing to both mutual human fellowship and concern and care for the whole earth are left to one side. More fundamentally, we see in ethical terms the practical outworking of Barth's refusal to admit the non-human into the covenant fellowship. The question is: Is our relationship with the non-human properly marginal to theological ethics or has Barth in fact marginalised it?

(iv) The fourth difficulty lies in Barth's treatment of 'dominion'. Earlier Barth had been careful to warn against any exaggerated interpretation of this notion. As a consequence of the divine image, man is placed in a superior position "by a higher dignity and might". But crucially "(M)ore than this must not be read into man's dominion over the beasts". Moreover "(M)an's lordship over the animals has internal and external limitations".³⁵ He is to represent God to them and to see himself as a primus inter pares. In this section, however, dominion becomes almost by sleight of hand, dominance. It's "primary meaning" is now described in terms of "requisitioning, disciplining, taming, harnessing, exploiting and making profitable use of the surplus forces of nature".³⁶ It is now claimed that this meaning is the one intended by Genesis 1:28. Our major difficulty here is not the total change of emphasis, however, but the underlying contrast now proposed between lordship and dominion on one hand and responsibility and

35. CD, III, 1, p. 187.

36. CD, III, 4, p. 349 and see n. p. 349.

service on the other. Lordship becomes a means of qualifying responsibility, thus "(R)esponsibility within the limits of lordship".³⁷

By picking up the often traditional (yet biblically erroneous) notion of dominance rather than dominion, Barth is liberated from the need to ask what man's superiority involves morally. He assumes that superiority can be equated primarily with subjugation, control, use of power, and of course there may indeed be some right use of all these things. But in presenting the issue this way, the underlying question, what it means to actualise and represent God's power in creation is conveniently put to one side.

A Failure in Method

If therefore what Barth writes has the nature of a sympathetic yet ad hoc judgement when it comes to animals, the simple answer is that his chosen theological framework does not allow much room for manoeuvre. If "in practice" as well as in theory "the doctrine of creation means anthropology"³⁸ the implications ethically can hardly be wide-ranging. If God is "obviously not interested" in the totality of other beings apart from man in the universe, an obvious corollary is invited, "Why should we be?" And yet, it is altogether telling of Barth's own perspicacity that he senses in this area, as in others, the root of some potentially significant issue. He will not move from human-to-human relations as the primary field of ethical endeavour and yet he cannot laugh Schweitzer off as revealing nothing about the nature of the moral matrix. Schweitzer writes of how a person with reverence for life will sometimes go to extraordinary means to save or rescue life. "When working by lamplight on a summer night, he would rather keep the windows closed and breathe stuffy air than see insect after insect fall on the table with wings that are singed", or, "If he comes upon an insect that has fallen into a puddle, he takes time to

37. CD, III, 4, p. 352; my italics.

38. CD, III, 2, p. 3; my italics.

extend a leaf or a reed to save it". "He is not afraid of being smiled at as a sentimentalist" argues Schweitzer. And Barth's response does not fail to show the essential ethical seriousness which Schweitzer's thought elicits. "Those who can only smile at this point", he writes, "are themselves subjects for tears".³⁹ And yet despite Barth's undoubted moral probity and seriousness, it is not just the rationality of animals which is revealed as "an enigma" at this point but the whole status and theological purpose of these beings. What are we to do with them all? How are they to relate to any fundamental theological scheme which takes the substance of traditional trinitarian faith seriously?

A Trinitarian Reconstruction

These questions challenge us to provide some trinitarian account of the status of animals which allows for the fullest possible statement of their purpose and being. If the witness of scripture is true that animals form part of a covenant relationship with man and God, what meaning does this have and what precisely are the ethical ramifications?

1. The Divine Giving

The Trinity is the source of all life. Barth will not compromise on this point and nor should we. He will not allow any other creative force responsible for the world as it now is. Rather than surrender the insight that God's creation is good, he will speak of the nature of evil as paradoxical, even mysterious beyond the point of theological explanation.⁴⁰ But with like-minded rigour we must begin with the sheer givenness of created reality and insist upon its value and significance. That it exists at all, is a fact of overwhelming theological importance. It is so easy

39. CD, III, 4, n. p. 349; Civilization and Ethics, op. cit., pp. 214-5.

40. E.g., "In order to be true to the facts, Dogmatics has here ... to be logically inconsequent", Credo, op. cit., p. 36; see also my p. 223.

when reading Barth to move almost unconsciously from the fact of existence to its theological explanation in the Son, that we have little chance to ponder, reflect and appreciate the whole realm of created givenness. God the Father gives birth to the differentiated unity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Trinity is therefore the source of all differentiated created being. All difference as well as complementariness and unity have their source in this being which is itself differentiated being.

If the question be asked: What is this created being for? the only satisfactory answer that can be given is that it is for God. It exists for life with the triune source of all things. This answer is the very measure of the significance of the question. Barth frequently locates the raison d'être of being in the incarnation of the Logos. All things, he maintains, exist to be serviceable to the purpose of God's self-disclosure in history. This position cannot by itself, however, adequately account for the totality of God's mysterious activity as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It supposes that one form or "mode" of the activity or the Trinity can bear the whole significance of the givenness of being. Rather the dynamic possibility opened up by trinitarian theology is that all created being serves the existence of every possibility of God as he is in his triune being. It is the Father's love for creation which is shown in the sheer variety and complexity of different kinds of being. It is a mysterious love which delights and rejoices in the gift of difference. It is the Father who with the Son expresses this love and thereby "gives light to all the world, to everyone who wants to be warmed by it".⁴¹ It is the Son who makes real, actual and manifest this saving love through the incarnation thereby ensuring its reconciliation to the Father. It is the Holy Spirit immanent

41. St. Catherine of Siena, The Dialogue, ET and introduction by S. Noffke, preface by G. Cavallini, The Classics of Western Spirituality (London: SPCK, 1980) p. 206. This is one of the ways in which St. Catherine figuratively expresses the love God has for "all creatures" (p. 205).

in creation which gives life through breath to all breathing beings and which acts to complete and fulfil the work of reconciliation forward to the redemption of all things. "(T)here is indeed not one single gift which reaches creation without the Holy Spirit"⁴² writes St. Basil the Great. It is the very immanence of the Spirit which enlivens the world. In this three-fold way God establishes, ensures and enfolds the cosmos. Nothing which is truly created being can be without this radical vulnerability to the operation of the Trinity. No being can be just of itself, for itself or by itself. The 'for-ness' of all beings in this God-ward direction is inexorable and immutable. Of course it can and does take different forms but always only pointing in the same direction. What is disclosed in the notion of the covenant relationship with created beings is not some special relationship on God's part but rather the one special relationship which underlies all other possibilities. The openness of creation to God is, as Jenson observes, its "insurpassable futurity". The possibility of creation is the possibility of God-with-creation. God is the "Future, Past and Present" of all things.⁴³

This trinitarian account needs to be underpinned by two distinct, yet complementary, insights. The first is that all creation is blessed. Barth, as we have seen, understands "blessing" as authorisation to be. All created being is essentially right as it is; it is inherently valuable to its Creator. It does not require human affirmation or justification. It must follow from trinitarian theology that what is given is good. D.W. Hardy and D.F. Ford speak of how the activity of creaturely praise infolds "an ecology of blessing ... since God's blessing is given by letting each creature, animate or not, be itself, and by enabling it, with infinite

42. St. Basil the Great, De Spiritu Sanctu (24.55) cited and discussed in T.F. Torrance, Theology in Reconstruction, op. cit., p. 222.

43. Jenson, God after God, op. cit., pp. 190 and 191.

respect for its nature, to participate in the drama of the universe, then creation's response is primarily in its very existence".⁴⁴ The being of each and every creature glorifies God. By being what it is, and has the capacity to be, it renders honour to God. "Are not you also creatures created by my God? ", asks St. Catherine of Genoa of living creatures in her garden. " Are not you, too, obedient to Him?".⁴⁵ Barth at least in his surer moments, sees this vital point, though in qualifying the capacity of creation for self-evident praise of its Creator, he inevitably calls into question the theological justification of non-human existence.⁴⁶ We need to remember that it is 'the Lord's Song' which is sung throughout creation, and whilst undoubtedly man stands at the centre, it is his task to facilitate and give voice to the offering of the rest. "This is the role of human beings in creation, articulating its praise in fresh ways".⁴⁷

The second point which needs to be held together with the first is that creation is necessarily an unfinished business. If there is on one hand the danger of failing to see the goodness proper to creation, there is equally the danger of judging God too prematurely on the other. Barth, as is well known, dreamt of a new Spirit theology that would some day claim the attention of future generations of theologians.⁴⁸ Whatever the precise likelihood of this possibility, we can only mourn the absence of more explicit consideration of pneumatology throughout the Dogmatics. The point is not new,⁴⁹ of course. It is possible that if only Barth had

44. Hardy and Ford, Jubilate: Theology in Praise (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1984) p. 82; my italics.

45. St. Catherine of Genoa cited from her biography, Vita, p. 72b, in Friedrich von Hügel, The Mystical Element of Religion as Studied in St. Catherine of Genoa and her Friends, 2 Vols. (London: J.M. Dent, 1858) Vol. I, p. 164.

46. See earlier discussion, CD, III, 2, pp. 171-175.

47. Hardy and Ford, op. cit., p. 82.

48. See the moving account in Busch, op. cit., p. 494.

reached his final projected volume on redemption we should now be in a position to view his work in an entirely different light. We need always to remember that as defined by trinitarian formulae, God is Creator and Reconciler and Redeemer. The world as we now see it is not the only possible world. The limitations, constraints and difficulties which press upon us at this moment in time must not be elevated to the status of eternal determinations. We have always to wrestle with the possibility that the world may become, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, a very different place. Eschatological thinking, including some apocalyptic,⁵⁰ which has frequently been disregarded, needs to feed our theological imagination.

The Response of Reverence

What then is the most appropriate human response to the fact of divine giving? It is the attitude of reverence for life. Barth defines this as "astonishment, humility, awe, modesty, circumspection and carefulness" but goes on to differentiate this attitude proper to humans from a weaker kind appropriate to animals. Barth sees reverence as "an adoption of the distance proper in face of a mystery".⁵¹ But how much more appropriate is this attitude to beings even the rudimentary ethology of which we have in many cases yet to master? The one thing of which we can be certain theologically, itself the most mysterious thing of all, is that other creatures, like us, have the same origin in the creative Word of God. "Surely we ought to show kindness and gentleness to animals for many

49. See, e.g. Gunton, Becoming and Being, op. cit., p. 218.

50. "Carl Braaten ... outlines some categories of apocalyptic thought that can be significant for systematic theology. Its dualism, with a radical disjunction between present and future, may provide support for a real theology of liberation, rather than development or evolution, and for a hope of freedom expanded to cosmic dimensions. Its vision of a new heaven and earth may awaken a much-needed theology of nature in the present ecological crisis ...", S.S. Laws, 'Can Apocalyptic be Relevant?' in M.D. Hooker and C.J.A. Hickling (eds.), What About the New Testament? (London: SCM Press, 1975) pp. 90f. The reference is to Carl Braaten, 'The Significance of Apocalypticism for Systematic Theology', Interpretation, 25 (October 1971) pp. 480-99.

51. CD, III, 4, p. 340.

reasons", writes St. Chrysostom, "and chiefly because they are of the same origin as ourselves".⁵² A view similar to that of St. Bonaventure who says of St. Francis that when "he considered the primordial source of all things, he was filled with even more abundant piety calling creatures no matter how small by the name of brother or sister because he knew they had the same source as himself".⁵³

These expressions of fellow feeling should not be despised. Of course it is possible to show excessive affection for animals as it is possible for one human being to be struck with quite inordinate love for another. It is also possible, even usual, for people to love another for the benefits that the other may bring rather than for the true good of the beloved. But sensitivity to and love for other creaturely inhabitants of God's good earth can be a sign of having grasped the profound inner unity that pervades created life. Of course St. Athanasius and others were right to rail against those who "applied the divine and transcendental title of God to stone or wood, and ... irrational wild beasts, paying them full divine honours and rejecting the true and real God, the Father of Christ".⁵⁴ Cases of idol making (human or non-human) threaten the vital distinction between Creator and creature and also, though this is seldom noticed, distort our relations with and responsibility for them. But the recognition of the need for reverence does not belong to this realm. We honour life because of the

52. St. Chrysostom cited in Donald Attwater, St. John Chrysostom (London: Catholic Book Club, 1960) pp. 59-60.

53. St. Bonaventure, The Life of St. Francis, ET by E. Cousins, the Classics of Western Spirituality (London: SPCK, 1978) pp. 254-5. "(L)ike so many fools of East and West, his wildness gave him a profound rapport with all living things: he preached to the birds, converted a wolf, and sang the praises of the wonders of creation. If St. Bernard of Clairvaux is God's jester, then St. Francis is his minstrel and troubadour", John Saward, Perfect Fools: Folly for Christ's Sake in Catholic and Orthodox Spirituality (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980) p. 84. For further examples of wildness and folly see The Little Flowers of St. Francis, ET by Raphael Brown (Garden City, New York: Image Books, 1958) esp. pp. 76f.

54. St. Athanasius, op. cit., pp. 23-25.

Lord of Life. "I could not but feel with a sympathy full of regret all the pain that I saw around me, not only that of men but that of the whole creation", writes Schweitzer in a moving passage from his autobiography. "From this community of suffering I have never tried to withdraw myself. It seemed to me to be a matter of course that we should all take our share of the burden of pain which lies upon the world."⁵⁵

The need for reverence is further emphasised by two other implications derived from our trinitarian outline. The first is the necessary distinction that must be drawn between God's good or purpose and our estimation of our own. To say that other forms of life exist for God is not to posit that they exist for us. "If one's basic theological perception is of a Deity who rules all creation, and one's basic perception of life in history and nature one of patterns of inter-dependence, then the good that God values must be more inclusive than one's normal perceptions of what is good for me, what is good for my community, and even what is good for the human species". Such thought opens up the possibility of "some uncomfortable conclusions" as J.M. Gustafson describes them. "If God is "for man", he may not be for man as the chief end of creation. The chief end of God may not be the salvation of man".⁵⁶ How far we would want to go in embracing these possibilities is another matter, but the general direction of the argument strikes me as entirely sound. What cannot be gleaned from a specifically trinitarian theology is what Barth wants, some times predominantly to press, namely that God is "obviously not interested in the totality of beings" which make up the divine creation. The fact that other creatures too have a share or a breath of the divine self-giving means that we have to wrestle with a God who is infinitely more

55. Schweitzer, My Life and Thought: An Autobiography, ET by C.T. Campion (London: Allen and Unwin, 1933) pp. 279-280.

56. Gustafson, Theology and Ethics (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981) p. 96.

varied and infinitely more creative than we often suppose. We cannot assume that an exclusively human-favoured interpretation of the incarnation is necessarily the right or only one. This is not to deny that incarnation involves real human benefit. "To claim that the purposes of the divine governance can be good for the whole creation, and not exclusively for human beings, is not to deny that God is 'the source of human good'".⁵⁷ But the danger in Barth's work as a whole is his consistent assumption that divine activity revolves primarily, often exclusively, around the divine-human covenant and its possibilities for the human species alone.

The second point concerns the distinction between divine and human utility. When Barth writes of animals as "provided for his (man's) use"⁵⁸ he tumbles into a very serious error. Man's estimation of his own utility is not the only or chief basis on which he can judge the relative worth of other living beings. They are not made "for" man but for God. The whole created universe does not simply exist for man's own use or pleasure but for the purposes of God disclosed in Jesus Christ. Once again we dare not deny that incarnation is truly of benefit to man but also we dare not suppose that the ousia assumed in this way (as traditional doctrine has always asserted) is solely human ousia unrelated to the rest of creaturely life. The divine utility which encompasses all created life includes, as Job found out, all kinds of beings apparently otiose from the human point of view.⁵⁹ What we have to reckon with in trinitarian theology is a God infinitely more open, creative and purposeful in relation to all that is,

57. Gustafson, op. cit., pp. 271-2. The reference is to H.N. Wieman, The Source of Human Good (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946).

58. CD, III, 4, p. 351.

59. Job 39: 13-18 and 38: 26-7 cited and discussed in J.A. Baker, 'Biblical Attitudes to Nature' in Man and Nature, op. cit., pp. 97 and 99.

than is usually our preference so to do.⁶⁰

In Contrast to Scholastic Dualism

The position we have outlined should be seen in major contrast to the classical writings of scholastic dualism. These people, not unfairly described by Alec Whitehouse as "aristocrats of the mind", are "unwilling to be comfortably or uncomfortably at home along with the world's minerals, vegetables and animals".⁶¹ Their primary impulse is to know. Physicality, and all that goes with it, is a threat to rationality or at the very least an incumbrance. Consummation or redemption is construed primarily in terms of deliverance from the messy world of flesh, physicality and substance. According to this view real existence consists in intelligent existence which is also soulful existence. The pursuit of God and salvation become inexorably linked to the recognition of souls, the cultivation of souls and the salvation of souls. The basic circle which makes spiritual awareness and communion possible is the possession of incorporeal souls.

This position, as we have seen held in varying forms by Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Descartes and other luminaries of the Greek and Christian tradition, does not escape Barth either. Whilst, on one hand, he utterly repudiates the notion of a disembodied soul, it becomes vitally clear that the absence of rationality, or rather the unproved rationality of animals, is an insuperable obstacle to their possession of full soulfulness and proper moral status on the other. In one other respect too Barth entirely

60. It is surprising to learn that even the usually cautious Karl Rahner offers a homily on Rom. 8: 18-23 under the title 'A Universe Made to our Measure' in which he claims that "all God's creation was arranged from the first to suit this poor man, this sinful man", Biblical Homilies, ET by D. Forristal and R. Strachan (Dublin: Herder and Herder, London: Burns and Oates, 1967) pp. 91 and 93; my italics.

61. Whitehouse, 'New Heavens and a New Earth' in The Authority of Grace, op. cit., p. 210; originally published in The Christian Hope, Theological Collections 13 (London: SPCK, 1970). I am indebted to Whitehouse for many perceptive points.

stands within this tradition. Genesis is interpreted not in terms of Hebrew monarchy but created hierarchy. Accordingly spiritual status determines moral status. Our worth before God becomes wedded to our rational capacity. Needless to say, the effects of this tradition on the moral standing of animals has been deleterious without exception.⁶² Even today theologians who have formally thrown off much of this tradition, can still write of how "nothing is of value unless it is experienced by some conscious being, who would choose it for its own sake".⁶³ In consequence orthodox Catholic teaching, as represented not only by its classical exponents but also by generations of moral textbooks, has formally denied the existence of moral duties to animals, except indirectly as human property,⁶⁴ and insisted upon their complete utilitarian subordination to man. Pope Pius IX, for example, forbade the opening of an animal protection office in Rome on the grounds that whilst humans had duties to fellow humans, they had none to animals.⁶⁵ Modern textbooks show just as little compassion:

Zoophilists often lose sight of the end for which animals, irrational creatures, were created by God, viz., the service and use of man. In fact, Catholic moral doctrine teaches that animals have no rights on the part of man ...⁶⁶

It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the triumph of scholastic dualism and its decisive continuance in many parts of the Christian church

62. For some gruesome historical examples see especially Keith Thomas, *op. cit.*, pp. 30 - 36 and 41 - 51.

63. Keith Ward, *The Living God* (London: SPCK, 1984) p. 27; my italics. To which Ward may reply that God does consciously value the non-human, but if this is his meaning, it is far from clear.

64. See H. Davis, *Moral and Pastoral Theology*, 5 vols (London: Sheed and Ward, 1946), Vol. II (1950) p. 258.

65. Cited by E.S. Turner, *All Heaven in a Rage* (London: Michael Joseph, 1964) p. 163.

66. *Dictionary of Moral Theology*, ed. by P. Palazzini, comp. by F. Roberti, ET by H.J. Yannone (London: Burns and Oates, 1962) p. 73.

has inhibited proper acceptance of the moral status of the non-human. But the major weakness of this tradition consists in its trinitarian constriction. God is not truly free to relate to creation in all its fullness. Matter is only matter, pace de Chardin,⁶⁷ the whole realm of the non-rational or irrational is fundamentally extrinsic to the work of the Creator. God, presented as the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Aquinas deals exclusively with human persons, so that whatever ousia God has reconciled to himself in his Son must be defined largely or entirely in terms of the personal.⁶⁸ The more this scheme is pressed, the more redundant the work of God the Creator becomes. Again the wide and unfathomable work of God the Spirit energising and sustaining creation becomes telescoped into the operation of fusing individual human souls. Horne's protest deserves a hearing:

if there is to be a halt to the destruction of our environment and a restoration of the world of nature, then a change must begin in the Church at a fundamental level. Quite simply, the Church should be less concerned about the salvation of souls and more concerned about the sanctification of life, or, to be more precisely theological, less concerned about 'justification by faith' and more concerned about 're-creation by grace'; and the re-creation will extend to the whole of the natural order.

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67. See, e.g., Teilhard de Chardin's 'Hymn to Matter', "I acclaim you as the divine milieu, charged with creative power, as the ocean stirred by the Spirit, as the clay moulded and infused with life by the Incarnate Word", in Hymn of the Universe, ET by Gerald Vann, introduction by N.M. Wildiers, Fontana Books (London: Collins, 1974) p. 65; also Man's Place in Nature: The Human Zoological Group, ET by R. Hague, Fontana Books (London: Collins, 1966) pp. 19f and *passim*. De Chardin apparently wanted a "new Nicea" to determine the relationship of Christ to the cosmos, see Lyons, *op. cit.*, p. 215.
68. An approach which repeatedly emerges in the hands of twentieth-century theologians, e.g. J.A.T. Robinson proposes a paraphrase of John's Prologue: "The clue to the universe as personal was present from the beginning ... At that depth of reality the element of the personal was there from the start ... It came to its own in the evolution of the personal ...", Exploration into God (London: SCM Press, 1967) pp. 98-9; *my italics*. Clearly the personal is an important theme, but must so much be claimed for it? Can the whole being of the Trinity be encapsulated in the notion of the personal? Can the work of the Logos be solely defined in this way?

We are not souls to be plucked from matter on the day of our salvation, we are part of a universe which along with us waits for the consummation that has been promised by God in Christ.⁶⁹

2. The Divine Rejoicing

There is one moment in Part One of the Dogmatics where Barth's thought hovers, appearing to make a significant change of direction. The "yes" of God the Creator "challenges us not to evade the sighing of the created world" he writes. "It challenges us not to evade the sighing of the creature".⁷⁰ Man is called to share both the misery and joy of existing alongside all other creatures. These contradictory aspects are answered because God the Creator "so closely binds the life which He has created with the covenant".⁷¹ But the meaning of this covenant, as we have seen so often in Barth, is given an entirely anthropocentric interpretation:

God created man to lift him in his own Son into fellowship with Himself. This is the positive meaning of human existence and all existence. But this elevation presupposes a wretchedness of human and all existence which his own Son will share and bear.⁷²

So paradoxically enough non-human creatures live for the elevation of man and as a consequence or corollary share his necessary wretchedness as well. And yet even this minimalist interpretation is enough to state the problem directly for us and to elicit a more positive response. The problem or point is this: the significance of the incarnation cannot be contained in human terms alone. As a model of divine involvement it redefines our existing categories of God, man, and also the nature of created existence. God rejoices in what he has made. I mean by rejoicing that unique capacity

69. Horne, op. cit., p. 53; my italics.

70. CD, III, 1, p. 373.

71. CD, III, 1, p. 375.

72. CD, III, 1, p. 376; my italics.

of God, as defined through the incarnation, truly to enter the condition of the creature so that whilst on one hand its nature is infinitely respected, its being is permeated by infinitely greater possibilities for existence on the other. It means no less than that God bears the reality of pain and disorder in the universe and takes them to himself transforming them by the power of his love.

But why is it that we can be so confident, unlike Barth, that this reconciling movement whilst centred on man moves outwards to include the whole of created reality? There are two primary considerations which Barth neglects.

The first concerns the interdependence of human life in creation. Whilst Barth frequently proceeds on the assumption of a human nature absolutely differentiated from all other created nature, he does not deny the fundamental closeness especially between animal and human life. Moreover, he speaks of man as God's representative to the animal and vegetable worlds in a way that makes man's position clearly related to them. In the end even in Barth's own minimalist picture of events, animals especially are inextricably involved with men. We have seen that he formally rejects the Eastern view that man forms a microcosm of creation. But there seems little substantial difference between his position and that held, for example, by Lossky: "(Man) is not only a part of the whole, but potentially includes the whole, having in himself the whole of the earthly cosmos, of which he is the hypostasis."⁷³

The second consideration relates to the reality of misery in the animal

73. Lossky, In the Image and Likeness of God, ed. by J.H. Erickson and T.E. Bird, introduction by J. Meyendorff (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974) p. 107; for a concise discussion see John Meyendorff's Christ in Eastern Christian Thought (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1975) esp. 'The Cosmic Dimension of Salvation: Maximus The Confessor', pp. 131 - 152.

world. Whatever the solution offered, the problem should not be avoided. Barth appears to avoid it by his insistence that godlessness and therefore evil cannot arise in the animal sphere and by doubting whether animal pain is truly analogous to human pain.⁷⁴ But supposing for one moment that Barth is right here, what kind of pain could it be that they do suffer if they suffer at all? Barth's answer is surely revealing: animals suffer the pain and misery for which man alone is responsible. They are blessed with his blessings and cursed by his curses. In this sense, the problem of theodicy extends in precisely the same terms to animals and humans, except actually more so to animals who are the recipients of undeserved or unmerited pain. All that needs to be maintained in order to safeguard the inclusive work of the Word in this respect is to hold that all pain and disorder caused by human sin is the object of God's reconciling love.

But is it possible to posit that human sin is the cause of disorder in the very nature of the created world? Are not decomposition, death and parasitical existence inherent in the very structure of God's creation? The questions are not new, of course, and have generally received few satisfactory answers.⁷⁵ Torrance's recent work may be an exception. Is the "predator-prey syndrome" and with it the animal pain involved "only ingredients in the functioning of animal survival-mechanisms and of orderly development, or do they contain elements which we cannot but regard as evil?" he asks. "What of the fact that creatures exist by devouring one another, and of the endless waste of life in the universe at all levels of sentient and organic life? What of needless arbitrary suffering like cruelty which shocks our sense of rightness and goodness?" "It is difficult

74. The doubt arises because we do not know "these forms of life from within", CD, III, 4, pp. 348f.

75. William Temple makes the point this way: "Shelve the responsibility for human evil on to Satan if you will ... We still have to ask, Why is the devil wicked?", Nature, Man and God (London: Macmillan and Co., 1935), p. 503.

not to think", he argues, "that somehow nature has been infiltrated by an extrinsic evil, affecting entropy for ill, corrupting natural processes, and introducing irrational kinks into their order, so that it is hardly surprising that even the ablest scientists can be overwhelmed by the pointlessness of it all".⁷⁶

Torrance's answer is that sin leads inevitably to corruption, indeed that sin and corruption are "ultimately inseparable". If this is true, it enables us to see animal corruption (decay, decomposition and death) as fundamentally similar to human corruption (decay, decomposition and death), indeed in both the same kind of reality is being manifest. "In view of this human experience it would be difficult not to believe that God is also opposed to evil in animal existence and all the suffering and pain it brings in its train, and that God in his universal purposes of creation and redemption will not allow his non-human creation to be wasted".⁷⁷ The Creator's will, therefore, should be seen as that which upholds, maintains and enlivens creation despite the dead hand of evil which at every level of being threatens its destruction. Corrupting negation and divine purpose meet at every point in creation where there is pain, suffering and disorder. "We must surely believe", argues Torrance, "that God does not let his creation break free from his control only to plunge down some slope of degeneration too steep for it to be reclaimed". Rather the wisdom and power of God combine to "direct it from a higher level of order in such a way that he makes any obstruction or evil misdirection imminent in nature serve a fuller and richer end than might have been otherwise possible".⁷⁸

The "yes" of God, argued Barth, challenges us not to evade the sighing of

76. Torrance, Divine and Contingent Order (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 122-3.

77. Torrance, op. cit., p. 124.

78. Torrance, op. cit., p. 125.

the creature. If only he had seen how far, how profound and how manifold is the sighing of the creature and how likewise is the "yes" of the Creator. Barth desists from this path because he is convinced that the election of Jesus into the Godhead means the election of man, specifically and concretely.⁷⁹ In holding so fast to this, he misses the vital point that what happens in Jesus is what happens in time, space and therefore creaturely history. "If space and time are not separate from the events that happen in them", argue Hardy and Ford, "Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection mean a new patterning of the spatio-temporal environment and its possibilities".⁸⁰ In the end, the election of man, the creature, is conceived at the expense of man with other creatures.

The Response of Responsibility

What then is the most appropriate human response to the fact of divine rejoicing? It is human responsibility. Barth, as we have seen frequently fails to articulate this possibility in his doctrine of man and even when he confronts it as part of his ethical discussion in Part Four can only view it in secondary and marginal terms. Of course it would be entirely disproportionate to locate responsibility for the non-human alone as the primary human responsibility. But there are good reasons for regarding it as far more important than Barth will admit.

(i) In the first place, man is actually placed in this awesome position. We do not desist here from Barth's repeated stress that man is central to creation, even "the higher necessity of his life, and his right to that lordship and control".⁸¹ But all man's prerogatives, powers, and opportunities must in turn be subordinate to the will of God. Much confusion, and

79. By putting the issue this way, we see how Barth assumes that the incarnation means the election of not just man but man and woman. In the light of recent church debates we see that even this is an assumption which not all Christians share, see E.L. Mascall, Whatever Happened to the Human Mind? (London: SPCK, 1980) discussing the role of 'masculinity' in God, pp. 150f.

80. Hardy and Ford, op. cit., p. 81.

81. CD, III, 4, p. 351.

undoubtedly much suffering to the animal world, has been caused by Christian writers failing to grasp the necessarily dependent and derived authority of man over creation.⁸² Man has no rights over the natural world. The point needs to be put in this stark, propositional form to ensure comprehension. Whatever man claims for himself and his own power may only be claimed within the overall sovereignty of God. But the proper criticism of Barth at this point is not moral but trinitarian. "Why ... does the Holy Spirit seem so remote from the anguish of world-occurrence in the Church Dogmatics?" asks Philip Rosato. "The interaction of God's Spirit and man's nature is missing in Barth's theology."⁸³ But if this is true, it is true not only of the realm of the personal, but of the whole of created nature. Man's responsibility for animals is a world of untheological speculation for Barth because he has not seen that it is the Spirit which gives voice to the sighing of the creature, and which elicits from man co-operation in his work of fulfilment and redemption. It is the lordship especially of the Spirit under which man must work in this area. The Pneuma awaits the coming of the sons of God who will help to make free the oppressed creation from their "bondage to decay" (Rom. 8: 21f). Barth, of course, will have none of this because he wants at all costs to preserve the sovereignty of God in his acts of Creation, Reconciliation and Redemption. But this sovereignty can be recognised in openness: "This openness is due precisely to the fact that God is open in Himself" writes Rosato. "God is not a closed monad, but a community of loving interaction who chooses to energize creation with grace, and through that energy make all

82. E.g. Lynn White Jr.'s paper, 'The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis', Science, 155, 37 (10 March, 1967) 1203 - 7, which held that the Judeo-Christian doctrine of creation was responsible for environmental crises because of its stress on the unqualified rights of human domination. Also, Peter Singer appears to regard any acknowledgement that man has authority over the beasts as "tyranny", even herb-eating dominion in the first creation saga is "benevolent despotism", Animal Liberation: A New Ethic for our Treatment of Animals (London: Jonathan Cape, 1976) pp. 202 - 234. See Robin Attfield, op. cit., pp. 20 - 34, for a discussion and critique.

83. Rosato, op. cit., pp. 136 and 139.

things ready - specifically through man - to co-operate with God's Spirit and thereby reach their promised fulfilment".⁸⁴

The second reason is that man is himself actually responsible for much pain and suffering and death, especially in the animal world. We do not deny that man's lordship is a difficult and demanding thing, requiring the facing of awkward choices, discrimination and much perspicacity. Given the structural nature of evil in creation, it is not possible for him to live wholly at peace with other creatures. It is hardly possible to live without utilising some products or by-products of the slaughter house. It is not always possible to live free of injury to life. Schweitzer in his own terms wrote perceptively of the world "as a ghastly drama of the will-to-live divided against itself" and even more perceptively of the "good conscience as an invention of the devil".⁸⁵ That granted, it is very difficult to justify the increasing of the burden on animals specifically when we are free to do otherwise. We grant necessity's necessity, but Schweitzer and Clark must be right in insisting that it "must be wrong to be the cause of avoidable ill".⁸⁶ More specifically still, the scholastic notion that animals have no claim upon us either "of justice nor charity"⁸⁷ must be jettisoned once and for all. Responsibility must go beyond reverence for all creation in insisting upon the claims of animals in particular. A point, incidentally, well made even by Calvin who saw that "a just man cares well for his beasts" (Prov. 12: 10) and hence "we are to do what is right voluntarily and freely, and each of us is responsible for doing his

84. Rosato, op. cit., p. 141; see also W.A. Whitehouse, 'The Holy Spirit and the Created Order', King's Theological Review, 4, 2 (Winter, 1981) pp. 63 - 68.

85. Schweitzer, Civilization and Ethics, op. cit., pp. 216 and 221.

86. Clark, The Moral Status of Animals, op. cit., p. ii; my italics.

87. J. Rickaby, Moral Philosophy (London: Longmans, 1889) p. 248; cf. J.C. McCarthy, "they (animals) can claim nothing at our hands; into our hands they are absolutely delivered", Problems of Theology 2 Vols. (Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1960) Vol. II, The Commandments (1960) p. 158.

duty".⁸⁸ If responsibility means anything it must involve the curbing of our appetites, the restraining of our greed and the protection of innocent life.

The third and obvious consideration is that man is the being actually capable of this responsibility. The scholastic perception that since animals can have no duties towards other animals, we can have none to them, arguably threatens the position of some humans as well as animals.⁸⁹ In all this man's theological perception of himself is important. It vitally matters that he should see himself as exercising lordship as God's vice-gerent over God's good creation. When he slips from this understanding man clearly exercises "tyranny" over animals.⁹⁰ Since from the standpoint of theology man "is clearly made the focal point in the inter-relations between God and the universe" as Torrance observes, he himself "needs to be put in the right both with God and creation".⁹¹ Man's proper and primary response to the rejoicing of God is always to lay before himself his need for repentance, for the change of heart to ensure that the Spirit can work within him. Torrance writes of man's "task to save the natural order through remedial and integrative activity, bringing back order where there is disorder and restoring peace where there is disharmony".⁹² Finding the measure of this daunting task will soon concern us.

In Contrast to Humanist Utilitarians

Our exposition of divine rejoicing and human responsibility should be

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88. Calvin, Commentaries, ed. and ET by J. Haroutunian with L.P. Smith, The Library of Christian Classics (London: SCM Press, 1958) Vol. XXIII, p. 329; my italics in second quote. In context Calvin is considering the prohibition concerning muzzling oxen in Deut. 25: 4.
89. See Tom Regan, 'An Examination and Defense of One Argument Concerning Animal Rights', Inquiry, 22, 1 - 2 (Summer, 1979) esp. pp. 204 - 212 concerning the claims of comatose humans.
90. Barth recognises this and uses the word, Ethics, op. cit., p. 143.
91. Torrance, Divine and Contingent Order, p. 129.
92. Torrance, Divine and Contingent Order, p. 130; my italics.

seen in contrast to the arguments of some 'humanist' utilitarians.⁹³ The first and by far the most common judges the worth and value of a being or commodity solely in relation to its utility to human beings. "Man is accustomed to value things to the extent that they are useful to him", protests Goethe, "and since he is disposed by temperament and situation to consider himself the crowning creation of nature, why should he not believe that he represents also her final purpose?"⁹⁴ Why not, indeed? For there can be little doubt that misinterpretations of the Genesis text, heavily stressing the utility of all creation for man, have provided strong encouragement for this view. There is only a small but decisive step from Barth's view that animals exist "for our benefit" to the view that man's benefit is the raison d'être of animals. That indeed Barth can even speak in these terms at all evidences a strong tradition of utilitarianism in moral theology.⁹⁵ Even Christian apologists like Charles Davis proclaim a

93. I use the term 'humanist' with caution if only because some of the early Christian humanists, Erasmus and More especially, had particular concern for animals.

94. Goethe, 'An Attempt to Evolve a General Comparative Theory' in Goethe's Botanical Writings, ET by B. Muella (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1952), p. 81. Cf. G.W.F. Hegel, "I doubt whether the most devout theologian would dare here in these mountains to attribute to nature in any way the aim of utility to man; man who has laboriously to rob nature of those skimpy things he can use ... but they would hardly have come up with that part of physico-theology which proves, much to man's pride, that nature arranged everything for his enjoyment and well-being; a pride that also characterises our age ...", 'Diary of a trip to the Berner Oberalpen' in Frühe Schriften (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1971) Vol. I, pp. 616 - 7 ET by David Farrell Krell, 'The Oldest Programme towards a System in German Idealism', forthcoming in Owl of Mineva. For a recent discussion of the relationship between Barth and Hegel, see L. Düring, 'Hegel, Barth and the Rationality of the Trinity', King's Theological Review, 2, 2 (Autumn 1979) pp. 69-81.

95. C.S. Lewis held that the development of animal experimentation marked "a great advance in the triumph of ruthless, non-moral utilitarianism over the old world of ethical law; a triumph in which we, as well as animals, are already the victims, and of which Dachau and Hiroshima mark the more recent achievements", 'Vivisection' in Undeceptions: Essays on Theology and Ethics, ed. by Walter Hooper (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1954) p. 186.

"desacralized" view of nature which makes technology possible and rightly opens nature to "man's exploitation".⁹⁶ And yet the modern use of animals has outgrown the metaphysical constructs that were once used to defend it. Now, human interests pure and simple justify almost any abuse of animals. David Ehrenfeld writes as a biologist of the unchecked assumptions of humanism especially as they operate in the context of conservation: "Thus the conservation dilemma is exposed: humanists will not normally be interested in saving any non-resource, any fragment of Nature that is not manifestly useful to mankind".⁹⁷ The only way out of this conflict is that which holds that all creation has intrinsic value because of its divine creation. What E.F. Schumacher calls the "meta-economic" value of living creatures. No form of life can be for us solely a means-to-an-end, a factor of production, or, a laboratory tool. "They are, of course, factors of production, that is to say means-to-ends, but this is their secondary, not their primary nature".⁹⁸

A second but related argument isolates some characteristic of creaturely life usually related to ourselves and chooses this as the basis of value. Peter Singer may be taken as an example of this procedure. For him "the life of a being that has no conscious experiences is of no intrinsic value". Despite Singer's obvious concern for the right treatment of animals, his criterion leads us to the complete devaluing of plants and to the acceptance of all abortion, even infanticide.⁹⁹ Now I do not want to deny the existence of

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96. Davis, God's Grace in History, Fontana Books (London: Collins, 1966) p. 21. There is a great deal of difference, of course, between regarding nature as sacred on one hand and solely as the object of exploitation on the other.
97. Ehrenfeld, The Arrogance of Humanism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978) p. 192.
98. Schumacher, Small is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as if People Mattered (London: Abacus Books, 1974) p. 88.
99. Singer, Practical Ethics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) p. 92; my italics; on abortion esp. pp. 119 - 122 and infanticide esp. p. 126.

especially valuable entities within God's good creation and consciousness and sentiency are two of these (which in turn make the existence of animal life of especial value). But it seems to me that Singer here, and theologians who argue in an arguably analogous way,¹⁰⁰ fail to perceive the general claim that all life has intrinsic value. Clearly the status of stones, vegetables and animals needs to be distinguished and such criteria can be useful in so doing. But the danger is always that these ready-to-hand criteria prevent us from entering into the fullness of God's joy in the totality of his work. Singer in this regard is far more indebted to past scholastic tradition (which he derides) than he thinks. If Descartes or Aquinas really thought animals were consciously perceiving minds, they would as little treat animals as automata as Singer so desires to treat plants. To reiterate; I am not denying the conceptual value of distinctions that can be made between different kinds of being but that such distinctions need to be made with much greater caution especially by those who actually believe we behold nothing less than God's creation. Schweitzer's refusal to "lay down universally valid distinctions between different kinds of life" because we end up "judging them by the greater or lesser distance at which they seem to stand to us human beings - as we ourselves judge" is, despite all its inconsistencies and difficulties, a warning that should be heeded.¹⁰¹

3. The Divine Generosity

The relationship between the crucified Lord and those who freely follow him

100. Ward argues that "person-hood is the highest value", The Divine Image: The Foundations of Christian Morality (London: SPCK, 1976) p. 41. The analogy, of course, is only in the fact of selection rather than in agreement about the factor or quality selected. Is it obvious that "personhood" is the "highest value"? For Ward (if I understand him aright) the element of the personal is the highest value because it is the fullest form of response to God. But is not God free to value equally the differing responses that can be made by the realm of creation to the Creator's beneficence?

101. Schweitzer, My Life and Thought, op. cit., p. 271; my italics.

is not a master-slave relationship. Probably for many decades, if not centuries, it has been conceived so, however. "The idea of the divine order, almost a hierarchy of things in the universe, is central to Thomas Aquinas's understanding of creation. Each thing in the universe occupies its proper place and exists to serve those things which are ranged above it."¹⁰² Man is subject to God as animals are subject to man. "(I)t is in keeping with the order of nature", writes Aquinas, "that man should be master over animals".¹⁰³ And yet such a picture of God tightly regulating and ordering creation through the use of intelligent beings, so that one level of existence is rightly subject to the rational control of another, has always stood in contrast to those New Testament strands which speak of the power of God in Christ exercised in condescension (katabasis). Jesus Christ "did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped" rather he "emptied himself taking the form of a servant" humbling himself becoming "obedient unto death, even death on a cross" (Philip 2: 5 - 8). This suffering lordship compels us to picture God's relationship with creation differently. God does not demand order, though he certainly wills it. He does not require obedience, though he certainly elicits it. In the end he is prepared to enter into the world's condition, to suffer it, and to transform it from within, rather than impose the end he has destined for creation. Such a view presupposes an infinitely more fragile creation on one hand and an infinitely more loving, self-costly loving God on the other. What God wants for his creatures is not possible without God bearing the cost in himself. In all this the very nature of the lordship

102. Horne, op. cit., p. 45; his italics.

103. Aquinas, Summa Theologica, ET by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 2nd revised ed. (London: Burns, Oates and Washborne, 1922) Part 1, QQ. LXXV - CII, p. 327. A similar but qualified relationship of order also characterises the relationship between man and woman. "(I)n a secondary sense the image of God is found in man, and not in woman; for man is the beginning and end of woman; as God is the beginning and end of every creature", Q. 93 Art. 4., op. cit., p. 289.

of God is redefined. Power, might, majesty and dominion are his, rightly his, but this lordship is expressed in free, generous, self-costly loving.

Many writers have grasped how this redefinition "sets the standard of disinterested love for others" which means in particular "hope for the hopeless, opportunity for the underprivileged, care for the weak, and every positive good for mankind".¹⁰⁴ But very few contemporary writers have even begun to explore its relevance for the non-human creation. Jürgen Moltmann is perhaps an exception. He specifically links the theology of the cross with "the groaning of the enslaved creation, the apocalyptic sorrow of the godless world".¹⁰⁵ Thus the "liberation of mankind" must in turn involve a replacement of the model of the "master-servant" relationship with nature. Domination over nature must give way to "a sympathetic relationship of partnership with the natural world".¹⁰⁶ Much in Moltmann's thesis is perceptive and provocative, but he stops short of seeing the vital correspondence between divine and human lordship.

The Response of Generosity

If man is really given lordship over creation, it is necessarily a lordship derived from God himself. He does not own creation, of course; he is not, unlike God, their absolute Lord. But the nature of this lordship can be none other than the same kind of lordship which God exercises. It is lordship to an end, to a final goal, and the nature of this lordship, as defined in Jesus Christ, requires humility, self-sacrifice, and personal cost. If we ask, therefore, what is to be the human response to the generosity of God, we can only reply the generosity of man. Man who can

104. Vincent Taylor, Forgiveness and Reconciliation: A Study in New Testament Theology (London: Macmillan and Co., 1941) p. 216; my italics.

105. Moltmann, The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology, ET by R.A. Wilson and J. Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1974) p. 65.

106. Moltmann, op. cit., p. 334.

take power for himself, effectively and really exercise dominance, is enjoined to exercise the loving lordship of the crucified. Our distinctive contribution therefore to the creation that God has made is to be the living image of that lordship revealed in his Son, Jesus Christ. Barth was almost right in viewing the image of God in man as something essential to what he is and something reflected in what he does. But so much more, theologically and Christologically, could have been opened up for him if only he had seen that the commission to man to rule the earth is a staggering confirmation of his line of interpretation. If the moral exemplar of Jesus reaching out to the despised, rejected, outcast and captive is the model of divine self-giving, it is difficult to know why it should not be extended to the least among us and especially the suffering non-human creatures of God's creation.

Some writers have undoubtedly grasped the general force of this when they speak, as for example Torrance, of "Man's priestly and redemptive role in the world"¹⁰⁷ in a phrase possibly borrowed from George Herbert:

Man is the world's high Priest: he doth present
The sacrifice for all: while they below
Unto the service mutter an assent,
Such as springs use that fall, and windes that blow.¹⁰⁸

Even Barth himself speaks of priesthood in a way that the killing of animals "when performed with the permission of God is a priestly act of eschatological character".¹⁰⁹ In this respect three further points of elaboration need to be made.

107. Torrance, Divine and Contingent Order, op. cit., p. 128.

108. Herbert, 'Providence' in The Works of George Herbert, ed. with comm. by F.E. Hutchinson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967) p. 117, and discussed in Michael Paternoster, Man: The World's High Priest; An Ecological Approach (Oxford: SLG Press, 1976) pp. 8 - 10.

109. CD, III, 4, p. 355; my italics.

(i) The first is that the sacrifice of Christ is that of the higher for the lower; not the reverse. Barth is on very weak ground in claiming that the dispensation for sacrifice, making use of "an alien and innocent victim and claiming its life for ours", can justify present killing. Whatever the precise merits or otherwise of vegetarianism, he is surely wrong in locating the spirit of Christian sacrifice for such a commission. Whatever may have been the right justification for animal sacrifice under the Old Covenant, we cannot avoid the fact that "all the animal sacrifices of the Temple were abolished for the Church" and that in so doing it "repudiated a part of the inheritance of Judaism".¹¹⁰ The revelation of God in Christ was to set the seal on a significantly developed conception of sacrifice - one, whatever the ambiguities of the old, which consisted in the free offering of life and love and not the required shedding of blood.

(ii) The second point is that sacrifice is costly. The lordship of man over creation is not a free ride. Generosity redefines our relations with creation, and especially animals, beyond those which may be claimed by the notions of the 'rights' or 'interests' of animals. Frequently the purpose of these debates is to establish moral limits beyond which man cannot reasonably pass in the exercise of his dominion and hence ensure the protection of animals from unnecessary abuse. Much in these debates is important and we should attend to them carefully.¹¹¹ But the concept of generosity by its very nature involves transcending the strict limits of

110. Rowley, The Biblical Doctrine of Election, op. cit., p. 163.

111. The major works are: S.R.L. Clark, The Moral Status of Animals, op. cit.; Peter Singer, Animal Liberation, op. cit., and (ed.) In Defence of Animals (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985); Mary Midgley, Animals and Why They Matter: A Journey Around the Species Barrier (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983); Tom Regan, All That Dwell Therein: Essays on Animal Rights and Environmental Ethics (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984) and The Case for Animal Rights, op. cit.; H. Miller and W. Williams (eds.) Ethics and Animals (New Jersey: Humana Press, 1983); R.G. Frey, Interests and Rights; The Case Against Animals (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1980) and Rights, Suffering and Vegetarianism (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983).

justice, that is, what can or cannot be reasonably claimed on behalf of other creatures. The 'generosity-view' does not begin by asking what rights should be accepted but how far man will bear for himself the cost of a properly generous response. If, as we have indicated, animal liberation is intimately bound up with human liberation, it matters whether man is truly sensitised to the natural world; it matters whether he can recognise the intrinsic value of other creatures; it matters how far he can exercise the fullness of his humanity in the actualising of his responsibility. The 'generosity-view' then asks searching questions of our current use of nature and animals in particular: Are there not certain ills which man should bear for himself rather than inflict upon animals in, for example, animal experimentation? Especially we might add when the good proposed amounts to little more than the addition to the market of one more soap-powder, detergent, weedkiller, lip-stick, hair shampoo or hair tonic? Since our need for food does not always strictly depend upon killing animals, is not vegetarianism a way of reducing our dependence on primary products and thereby lessening the burden on animal life? At the very least since the enormous range and variety of food especially in the West goes beyond anything like a reasonable interpretation of need, should we not find alternative methods to those employed in intensive farming? Since human pleasure can be had in so many different ways, can generous individuals justify the pleasure of sport if it involves the death of sentient creatures?¹¹² The questions are not exhaustive and are not meant to be. They merely highlight those possible moral responses which can properly characterise generosity to other life forms. Doubtless this view is not sufficient for a complete ethical theory of man's interaction with animals, much more would need to

112. Significantly enough, St. Francis de Sales listed the hunting of animals among those "innocent recreations" which we "may always make good use of", Introduction to the Devout Life, ET by Michael Day (London: Burns and Oates, 1956) p. 173.

be said and particular questions discussed more thoroughly, but the 'generosity-view' at least encapsulates one frequently overlooked dimension of our lordship over nature, namely costliness.

(ii) The third point is that the concept of generosity together with that of responsibility, enables us to re-establish the notion of animals and man forming one moral community under God. As we have seen, Barth derides this possibility. For him it poses a threat to the uniqueness of humanity.¹¹³ The reverse is surely the case: it enables human beings to see in the mutuality of life with other species how profoundly important is their divinely appointed role of priest and redeemer. It gives scope for the work of humanisation. Man "is to commit himself to the divine task of lifting up creation, redeeming those orders of which he forms part, and directing them towards their end".¹¹⁴ Scholastic theology, as we have seen, denied this moral community because beasts, they argued, can have no duties, responsibilities and therefore cannot possess rights. But the absence of duties does not make fellowship impossible. We need to reject the legacy of scholasticism represented by Bernard Häring when he argues that "nothing irrational can be the object of the Christian virtue of neighbourly love, charity". "Nothing irrational", he declares, "is capable of the beautifying friendship with God".¹¹⁵ In opposition, we need to posit the appropriateness and spiritual significance of God's all-embracing covenant. We have no reason for denying that other creatures can, in their own way, relate to and praise God. An understanding of the mystery of God's love which excludes in principle all other life forms is profoundly impoverished.

113. CD , III, 4, pp. 332-3.

114. Edward Carpenter, 'Christian Faith and the Moral Aspect of Hunting' in Against Hunting: A Symposium, ed. by P. Moore (London: Gollancz, 1965) p. 136.

115. Häring, The Law of Christ: Moral Theology for Clergy and Laity, 2 vols (London: Mercier Press, 1963) vol II (1963) pp. 361 - 2.

Father Zossima's advice in Dostoyevsky's The Brothers Karamazov is a good antidote:

Love all God's creation, the whole of it and every grain of sand. Love every leaf, every ray of God's light. Love the animals, love the plants, love everything. If you love everything you will perceive the divine mystery in things. And once you have perceived it, you will begin to comprehend it ceaselessly more and more every day. And you will come to love the whole world with an abiding, universal love.¹¹⁶

The question may be asked, however, whether we have sufficiently detailed the moral limits involved in the moral, sacrificial lordship of man over creation. Part of the answer, as already indicated, is that the complexity of man's interaction with animals and the difficulty of establishing a comprehensive ethical theory requires much further work than this one study can provide. But it should also be clear that the major thrust of this concluding section insists that the moral dimension of our relationship with animals cannot simply consist in the prescribing of limits, the detailing of rules and the establishing of prohibitions. Certainly this is one side, and a vital one if we are to have checks and markers on the road to a developing sense of stewardship. But it is only one side, and arguably the less important. Moral theology can never be satisfied with an understanding of moral response defined wholly in terms of the prevention of the worst rather than the promotion of the good. The issue is not how can we desist from the worst, but how can we live the best. The danger inherent in all moral prescribing is that the minimum we can muster so often becomes the standard of charity. It matters in this area, perhaps more than most, that man offers a free response of generosity to that freely given

116. Dostoyevsky, The Brothers Karamazov, 2 vols., ET by David Magarshack (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1958) Vol. 1 (1958) p. 375. Cf. the insights of many poets, e.g. S.T. Coleridge in his conclusion to 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'; D.H. Lawrence on man's "connection with the living cosmos" in 'Fatality'; Edith Sitwell on how Christ "bears in his heart all wounds ... of the baited bear ... of the hunted hare" in 'Still Falls the Rain', or Tennyson's conviction that "nothing walks with aimless feet; that not one life shall be destroyed, or cast as rubbish to the void, when God hath made the pile complete" in 'In Memoriam', all in Peter Levi (ed.) The Penguin Book of English Christian Verse (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984) pp. 215; 286; 294 and 232.

generous love of the Trinity.¹¹⁷ The agenda is how can we maximise by co-operating with the Spirit the fullest human responses of reverence, responsibility and generosity.

In Contrast to Naturalistic Theodicy

Finally our exposition must be opposed to the views of various exponents of naturalistic theodicy. According to Andrew Elphinstone "pain, in itself, is neutral". It is simply raw material for our growth as persons in an evolutionary process.¹¹⁸ According to Peter Geach, the Creator is characterised by "mere indifference to the pain that the elaborate interlocking teleologies of life involve". He cannot share with non-human creatures "the virtue of sympathy with physical suffering".¹¹⁹ According to John Hick, the existence of animals and all the pain they suffer can be justified because "they represent possible forms of being, and therefore of goodness, and because their existence is accordingly necessary to the fullness of the created world", or even because "sentient nature supports and serves its human apex".¹²⁰ Such "explanations" of animal pain are surely deficient. They have mainly one thing in common: a despair of God's redemptive capacity in Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit.

117. The need for generosity was firmly grasped by the Christian founders of the S.P.C.A. in their first 'Prospectus' published in 1824. "Is the moral circle perfect so long as any power of doing good remains? Or can the infliction of cruelty on any being which the Almighty has endowed with feelings of pain and pleasure, consist with genuine and true benevolence?", RSPCA Records, Vol. 11 (1823-26) p. 198. This first appeal on behalf of the newly-formed society was signed by various well-known Christian philanthropists including William Wilberforce, Richard Martin and Arthur Broome (an Anglican clergyman who became the first secretary of the Society and landed up in prison because of the society's debts). For two pioneering Christian works, see Henry Crowe, Zoophilos; or Considerations on the Moral Treatment of Inferior Animals (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1820) and esp. Humphry Primatt, The Duty of Mercy and the Sin of Cruelty to Brute Animals (Edinburgh: T. Constable, 1834).

118. Elphinstone, Freedom, Suffering and Love (London: SCM Press, 1976) p. 106.

119. Geach, Providence and Evil (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) pp. 77 and 79.

120. Hick, Evil and the God of Love, Fontana Library of Philosophy and Theology (London: Collins, 1968) pp. 250 and 251.

"(I)t does not seem that an eschatological new heaven and new earth, with a new animal creation, could relieve the problem of earthly animal pain." "For, unless we postulate a heaven for the millions of millions of individual animals that have perished ... no future state of the universe will be relevant to the pains that these creatures have undergone."¹²¹ And even more directly, can any eschatological hope recompense suffering humans, we may ask? In different ways these theodicies converge at this basic point: God does not reconcile the world; he must be reconciled to the world as we know it. And if this world as we know it exhibits structural evil in the form of pain for millions of its inhabitants, that pain must either be accepted as the way God wants the universe to be or it simply cannot be pain as we know it to be. Kingston's firm conclusion that "British theodicy, although not formally denying animal suffering, has often virtually done so by reducing its intensity to zero" is difficult to dispute.¹²² Barth, alas, does not fare much better. He does not deny that creation "in its own way" participates in redemption. But "consistent apostles of the protection of animals" are charged with not facing the world as it is and as God intended it to be: "in virtue of which the big fish does not greet the little fish but eats it".¹²³ Those who opt for vegetarianism in order to relieve animal suffering represent "a wanton anticipation of ... the new aeon for which we hope".¹²⁴ Is all conscientious striving therefore for the world we hope for, through the power of the Holy Spirit, only wanton, that is, empty activity? Barth here is hardly consistent. His own work for international peace was actually based on a full declaration of the peace already achieved for us through the reconciliation of the world by Jesus

121. Hick, Evil and the God of Love, op. cit., p. 252.

122. Kingston in op. cit., p. 487.

123. Barth, Ethics, op. cit., p. 142.

124. CD, III, 4, n. pp. 255-6.

Christ, and its full realisation in the world to come. There is no "wanton anticipation" here. We have a "responsibility to witness to that peace and find ourselves called to do it".¹²⁵

The major point at issue here, as throughout, is theological. It is wholly un-trinitarian to suppose that the world as we now see it (with all its attendant waste, frustration, misery and evil) is the only kind of world possible in the future. Only a theology that is ruthless in its determination to hold fast to God as Creator and Reconciler and Redeemer can begin to give full expression to the hope of the world to come. All this of course invites the charge of utopianism. And so be it. The Utopians of More's imagining conceived themselves not as "masters" but "stewards" of God's creation, especially generous in their care of animals. "They do not believe that the divine clemency delights in bloodshed and slaughter, seeing that it has imparted life to animate creatures that they might enjoy life."¹²⁶

125. Barth, Letter to Hiderobu Kwada of Tokyo, 22 September, 1964, Karl Barth: Letters 1961-1968, op. cit., pp. 88 - 91.

126. More, The Complete Works, ed. by E. Surtz and J.H. Hexter, The Yale Edition of the Complete Works of St. Thomas Moore, 4 Vols., (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1965) Vol. 4, Utopia, (1965); on farming p. 115 and comm. pp. 388 - 9; on desisting from sacrifice p. 235; on hunting p. 171.

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